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LAW IN THE WORLD OF ETHICS.

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It was with my hearty approval that our Committee selected as the subject to be discussed at this Conference, Christian Ethics. In a time of sorrow and stress, of danger and death, critical questions and questions of authority and organization are dwarfed by the great problems of conduct. Men and women have to make strong resolutions, to determine courses of action one way or the other, to take up a definite position in regard to family and country; we can no longer hesitate and postpone, but must act. And at the same time the very foundations of active life, the principles with which we had become imbued, are on all sides called in question. They have to be tried, to see whether they can resist the pressure of changed circumstances. Questions such as the lawfulness of war, the supremacy of conscience, the rights of the State, come up and demand definite solution. We do well to spend a few days in thought and friendly discussion, in order that we may be better able to meet the problems of conduct which are constantly coming in our way.

But to argue out these matters from first principles would be too great a task for us. We are a society with a definite programme, we agree on certain well-defined principles; and these principles form a sort of platform on which we may stand and from which we may look out on the facts of country and

religion. I think it will be found that there is a fair amount of agreement among us. This, indeed, is proved by the remarkable unity of view running through the volume on *The Faith and the War* recently published by us, and the friendly reception generally accorded to that volume in the Press shews that we have with us a great body of opinion in the country: we are no voice crying in the wilderness; but we take our stand like Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs, in the gates and in the market place.

I shall not, this evening, make any attempt to detail the problems to be attacked by successive speakers. They are familiar enough to us, however much they may need the light of fresh examination. I shall be content to set forth a few aspects of our general subject, distinctions which seem to me of the greatest importance, and which go to the very root of all ethical discussion in our days.

The members of the Churchmen's Union accept, in regard to the Christian faith, an evolutional as opposed to a cataclysmic view. We, or at least the great majority of us, believe that although the faith had a historic Founder, and is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, yet it did not come into the world full fledged, and perfect for all time, but that it was left for members of the Church in future times, under the guidance and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to adapt, to re-state, the original Christian principles, to fit them to new surroundings, even to add to them fresh principles which were not within view at the time when Christianity was born, but which have become important as the Society has grown, and become a part of a wider and more complex civilization.

We recognise that Christianity did not come into the world as a wholly novel thing, that it was led up to by the course of Jewish inspiration, culminating in the writings of the Jewish Apocrypha, and that it seized and assimilated, by virtue of an inner energy, whatever it found good in the existing religions of the heathen world. It grew like a plant, deriving nutriment from the soil, and taking to itself whatever was necessary for its

development. Christianity, like Judaism, is a progressive revelation of God; not a mere system of beliefs sent down from heaven, to be received on authority, but a group of active ideas, commending itself to the hearts and the intellects of men, and proved to be true by the effects it works in feeling and conduct.

And what is true of the Christian faith must be true also of Christian ethics. The Saviour did not, like Mohammed, lay down fixed rules of conduct to be observed blindly by his followers, but set forth a few leading principles, leaving their application to the wisdom and the virtue of the future Church. Hence Christian morality is not a static but a dynamic thing, it grows and develops to meet changing needs and fresh circumstances. And it is an inevitable corollary of this power to change that in some nations and in some churches there comes the painful experience of perversion and retrogression. It is impossible to leave open the gate which leads to progress without opening also that which leads to degradation and ruin.

If Christian Ethics is progressive, then it becomes the task, the noble and inspiring task, of each generation in the Church to search for the particular side of the Christian teaching which belongs especially to the age, and, while not letting go the principles taught in the New Testament and generally accepted in the Church, to add the new principles freshly revealed by the experience of the community. Now I think there can be no doubt as to the fundamental ethical principle which belongs especially to our age, a principle foreshadowed in the sayings of the Saviour, seen in various degrees by prophets in the Church, but now forced upon our view with a startling and awakening force. It is the principle of the reign of law in ethics.

And here I must guard against misunderstanding. The word law is, unfortunately, ambiguous. Sometimes it means commands laid down by authority, to be followed under penalties. I do not use the word in that sense at all, but in the sense in which it is used in science. When I speak of law in the human and moral world, I mean *order*, that there is in the

human world, as in the physical world, a fixed rule and constitution of things, though, as we shall see later, there is not, of course, any hard or mechanical constitution. I mean that in the world of conduct no action stands isolated, that the nexus of cause and effect stretches backward into the remote past and forward into the dim future, that human conduct is an evolution, a gradual progression from age to age.

I suppose it would scarcely be possible to state this principle more clearly and definitely than it is stated in the New Testament. Everyone is familiar with the parable of the mustard seed which grew and became a great tree. Everyone will remember how the Saviour reproved the Pharisees, who could see in the sky the signs of coming fair or bad weather, but could not see the signs of the times, or read the nexus of cause and effect in the ethical world. Nor could the principle of law and continuity in ethics be more clearly stated than in the saying:—

> "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

In quite the same line is the great saying of St. Paul:—

> "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap;"

or that other saying:—

> "Every man's work shall be made manifest; and the fire itself shall prove every man's work of what sort it is."

Such sayings as these come home with infinitely more force to us than they did to our ancestors. For the recognition that the world is a place of law and order, or regular succession of cause and effect, has become far more general than it used to be. In the case of those who have had a scientific education it is the very first of all mental postulates; and even in the case of ordinary people who have had less complete mental training, it is gradually becoming predominant. Yet its real meaning and its implications as regards practical life are by no means perfectly clear, and it is quite worth while to spend a little time in considering them.

To begin with the physical world, the natural surroundings which lie about us, and condition our lives at every turn. It has long been recognized that our power over natural forces is strictly conditioned by the uniformities of nature. It is only by obeying nature that we can hope to rule it. The enormous growth of our power over nature, the triumphs of steam, of electricity, of aviation, and the rest, have all been made possible by closer and more scientific study of the visible world. The laws of that world have been gradually revealed to generations of earnest searchers, who have built the platform on which practical inventors have taken their stand. Goodness of purpose, imagination, enthusiasm would in this sphere lead to nothing, unless combined with an exact knowledge of natural phenomena. If a man built a ship without competent knowledge of the laws of physics, of the properties of iron and wood, of air and water, he would build in vain. And we further see that it is the very fact that we work in an universe of fixed law which gives a man the possibility of material progress. If chemical mixtures produced sometimes one result and sometimes another, if iron were sometimes harder than wood and sometimes softer, no such progress would be possible.

Now I know well that in the moral and human world the nexus of cause and effect is less calculable. I know well that here we are not in a realm of necessity, but in a realm where there is room for free will, for character, for divine inspiration. Yet it is true that unless we recognize and use the uniformities, the observed ways of the moral universe, in this field also we shall work to no purpose. The world of humanity is after all not a place of chance and caprice. The laws which belong to humanity are more profound than those which appertain to the physical world, harder to search out, more difficult to understand. But nevertheless they exist; and no one can work to any purpose in the ethical and social world unless he has some appreciation of them. They form a scheme to which every one is obliged to conform himself; they are a given frame on which we have to weave the embroidery of our lives. If we do not

allow for them, no good intention, no brilliancy of imagination, no speculative ability, will enable us to achieve any worthy result. And we may go further and say that unless the world of humanity were thus a more or less fixed medium, the whole moral character of conduct would be destroyed. Men would not reap as they had sowed, wisdom and folly would be undistinguishably mingled, instead of a possibility of ethical progress, we should have only a kaleidoscope of events without order or meaning.

Just as the idea of evolution has spread in recent years from biology into history, entirely altering its character, so I think the belief in law and order must spread from the study of nature to that of man. And as practical invention has been made possible by orderly study of nature, so an orderly study of man has to precede any attempt at a more ethical scheme of life, and a more effective organization of society. This is the task which lies before the rising generation. The brilliance of recent invention in the physical world has dazzled our eyes, and we have not seen that discoveries and inventions quite as dazzling in ethics and sociology may lie before us.

II.

It would be a great misfortune if the growing sense of law in the moral and human world were to induce disbelief in the working of Providence and the efficacy of prayer.

These great Christian ideas may have to submit to some modification, but not to weakening. Though we may continue to believe in the over-ruling power of Providence, we shall probably be ready to trace its working in a steady influence on the unconscious strata of human life, and through human personality and co-operation into the world, rather than through any over-riding of cause and effect in the visible world. When a man expects to escape by Divine favour the results of his actions, his power of work is ruined, he waits for something to turn up to accomplish the ends which he could quite well accomplish himself if he gave his mind to the matter. But he may give up this demoralizing waiting for providences, and yet

intensely believe that he is at every moment in the hand of God, and that without Divine help he could do nothing that is worth doing. If a belief in Providence makes us despise foresight, be careless and slack in our actions, it will lead us to harm. But if, on the other hand, it makes us realize what an enormous privilege it is to work with God in a frame of society made and arranged by God for our higher good, then it will be a force beyond value.

We have to regard the present distress not only as a punishment for past transgressions, but also as a means for rising to a higher level. There is here, no doubt, on the surface a contradiction. A punishment is, on the face of it, a painful thing; and certainly in our terrible losses and national peril, there is pain enough. But we see in everyday life, as well as in great crises, that to those who know how to take a punishment it may prove, in some respects, a blessing in disguise. It is one of the many paradoxes of ethics. Men, through wrong doing or through folly, suffer; and yet, if they rightly take the suffering, they may rise to a higher level than they would have reached if they had never gone astray. Thus it is in ordinary life, and thus it is with nations. The very process of suffering opens the door of ethical progress.

In the same way those who are in the habit of praying for what they want, instead of taking the proper means to secure it, may be prone to indolence and weakness. Yet prayer has its recognized place in the moral world. Those who work without praying are as one-sided as those who pray without working. By prayer a man may come in contact with an infinite source of strength and happiness. So far from this being in opposition to the settled scheme of the universe, it is one of its most marked features.

I must not speak further of providence and prayer, as to which we may hope to hear much in our discourses. I only wish to make it clear that a strong conviction of law and order in the realm of conduct, though it may refine religion, should not weaken it.

III.

I will pass on to notice one or two other tendencies in ethics which have become more prominent in consequence of the changed ways of thought. I can only treat of them very slightly, but even that may be worth while.

It seems to me that in the ethics of the coming age two ideas, both of them very prominent in the early Christian teaching, must have more vogue than they have had in the past.

The first is the idea that morality is not merely an individual thing, but social. Men are not at bottom detached units, but members of the human race, and they belong also to smaller units, a church or a country. This collective morality has by no one been taught more brilliantly than by St. Paul. He tells us that we are all members of one body, having need one of another, that when one member suffers all the others suffer with it, that one blood runs through the whole, and each man reaches his own highest development in subordinating his own activity to that of others. St. Paul, of course, is speaking of the Church, of the corporation of which Christ is the Head. But the same principles apply, in a measure, to each of us as a member of a society or a country or a city.

This idea of social ethics has in many countries, and especially in England and Scotland, been too much lost sight of. Individual morality and individual religion have been over-fed. Hence the widely spread notion that a man's conscience is to him an infallible guide; and that, in following it, he is responsible only to God. We are ready enough to condemn the German writers who teach the absolute dominance of the State, that the State is above morality, and has only to consider its own interests. But we often fall into the opposite fault of denying to any community the right of dictating the conduct of individuals.

To dwell on all the unpleasant fruits of our own over-fed individualism would take me too far. I can only say that every one who loves his country or his church must be glad to see the current setting in the other direction. Whether or not we

consider ourselves as belonging to the socialists, at all events a certain leaven of socialism is everywhere working and fermenting. And no new scheme of ethics is likely to attract the younger generation which does not treat man in society rather than man in isolation as the typical unit.

Another visible tendency in modern ethics is to dwell rather on the positive than the negative aspect of goodness. This also is thoroughly Christian. It is as prominent in the teaching of the Synoptic Gospels as the social idea is in the Pauline Epistles. We need but remember the discourse of the Saviour with the rich young man, who had been keeping the commandments from his youth up, had been perfect on the negative side of morality, but was not ready to hear the injunction "Sell all thou hast, and follow Me." Islam teaches more completely than Christianity the duty of acquiescing in the will of God. But Christianity lays all the stress not on abstaining from evil, and accepting the will of God, but on active and enthusiastic co-operation with it for the service of men. The respectable people, the cultivators of regular schemes of conduct, come off in the Gospels very badly compared with the repenting sinner, the returning prodigal, the woman whose sins were forgiven because she loved much.

I suppose that in times of prosperity and peace the negative virtues have more vogue; and that, when there is a strong call to action, and passions, good and bad, are awaked in the hearts of the people, positive and active virtue comes by its own. There arises among those writers who appeal most strongly to the general feeling, a tendency to lay more stress on enthusiastic forms of goodness. The fighting, in which every man depends for life on the constancy and courage of his neighbours, has given a stimulus alike to social and to active morality, as contrasted with mere blamelessness and individual virtue.

The intellectual basis for such an ethical tendency has not been wanting, has indeed been working in the world of thought for some time, through the writings of men like William James and Bergson, who have laid stress, on the one side on the

importance of that general ground of human society which we call the unconscious, and who on the other side have insisted that in men the active and conative side is primary, the reflective and intellectual, secondary. It is a phenomenon which we often note in history, and which is the best proof of the doctrine of Providence, that when a demand comes for particular qualities in a people, or men of a certain type, it is found that deep-seated movements in the unconscious substratum of life, often reflected in the brains of great thinkers, have already made preparation for the production of such qualities in the people, or such types of men. Thus the dynamic and positive, as contrasted with the static and negative view of goodness, comes in to fill a space which had already been prepared for it by the writings of great thinkers, who taught better than they knew, and made ready, as it were, a concrete platform, on which the great guns could rest.

IV.

However, I feel that I am getting into deep water, and making assertions which I cannot at present either justify or develop. I have no doubt that in the papers and discussions which are to come, these assertions will be illustrated, and receive either support or condemnation. Meantime, I will end by briefly restating the main point which I wished to bring before you. It is that the growing sense of order in the human and ethical world involves a somewhat different attitude towards practical life and conduct. If we regard the history of Christianity as a succession of miraculous interpositions by God in human affairs, as a scheme in which God does everything, and does not call upon man to do anything, we shall naturally expect obvious and arbitrary divine interventions in the present affairs of men. If miracles lie at the root of Christianity, we shall expect to witness miracles now. But most of us on the other hand think that in the past, even in the history of Christianity, God has worked not by arbitrary interpositions, but in and through man, by the divine inspiration of individuals and societies; and that the co-operation of man is at every turn

necessary for the accomplishment of the divine purposes. And holding this historic view, we recognize that God will not help us, in the war or anywhere else, unless we try to subordinate our own notions and intentions to the will of God, which has to be studied alike in history, and in the depths of the human heart.

I think that it will be some time before such views as these are generally accepted: they will make their way in the future, as they have in the past, by gradual penetration, a slow change in the general mind. And for the present, we must not be surprised if they are attacked as irreligious. Those who deny sudden and arbitrary interpositions of God in human affairs are often regarded as denying divine influences in life altogether, as ending in blank materialism. In our days there is everywhere a tendency to extremes, and moderation is regarded as too dull. Those who expect a direct and visible interference from above in human affairs are many, and those who find in the world only material cause and effect are many. But those who accept neither of these extremes are comparatively few, and are apt to be attacked on both sides. Yet this is the view which accords with fact and experience. God is working beneath consciousness and through consciousness in ways which are profound but not arbitrary; and the highest task which human intellect can take up is the discovery of those ways.

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

By Principal F. B. Jevons, Litt.D., Hatfield Hall, Durham.

Twelve months ago the questions submitted for our discussion this morning would have been answered by the man in the street without any hesitation, or difficulty, in a perfectly consistent manner, thus: Conscience is the power or faculty of forming correct moral judgments; its judgments are valid and final; no external authority is superior to it; and we accept the teaching of Christ because it appeals irresistibly to our conscience. In the words of Bishop Butler conscience is "that principle by which we survey and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions," a principle "manifestly claiming superiority." "This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself; and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world."

During the last twelve months the conscientious objector, to the best of his strength and power, has striven to the end that his conscience may "absolutely govern the world." And by so striving he has made it clear to others, if not to himself, that he is not the only person in the world who claims to have a conscience. What he has not made clear is why his conscience should absolutely govern the world rather than anyone else's. If he may, or must, do what is right in his own eyes, the same liberty and duty must pertain to those who differ with him on any matter in dispute. And this amounts to saying either that there is no absolute right or wrong; or that, if there is, we have no means of discovering it—it is non-existent for us. That is a conclusion which neither he nor we can accept. And as it is the conclusion which follows directly and necessarily from the answers given by the ordinary man to the questions submitted for our discussion this morning, we have to consider whether those answers are right or not. Let us then take them in turn.

The faculty theory of Conscience, the view that Conscience is a faculty or power to form correct moral judgments, is a piece of philosophy, not of religion, and a piece of philosophy that has for some time now been exploded and renounced by philosophers. To say this is not, as those who suppose Conscience to be a faculty are apt to imagine, the same thing as saying that there is no difference between right or wrong, or that it is impossible to form correct moral judgments. It is a statement of the simple truth that it is no faculty but the whole man that does whatever he does do, and consequently that it is the whole man, and not any single part of him, that discriminates, or attempts to discriminate, between right and wrong. The faculty theory is a Greek idea, and an idea that originated in Greek philosophy, not in the religious consciousness of the Greeks. The ordinary Greek, like men of every other race, felt that the gods were the guardians of morality. But the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, severed morality from religion, and taught that there were duties to the gods, which consisted in the performance of ritual, and were quite distinct from the four cardinal virtues and from the pursuit of human good. This severance of morality from religion was the work of philosophy, and has since found favour with philosophers, both religious and non-religious. It gained in favour and strength, when conscience came to be regarded as one of the various faculties with which man was supposed to be endowed. The tendency, indeed, was for this faculty of conscience to be viewed as independent of religion. As such it might be regarded as lending to religion a support, powerful precisely because independent of religion. But eventually it came to be considered as not only independent of but superior to any form of religion. It claimed, and was conceded, the right of determining a man to reject rather than accept any given form of religion; and consequently, in the last resort, of rejecting religion altogether. The objection to any form of religious service may be as conscientious as objection to military service. But though this was the consequence logically developed by philosophy

from the philosophic severance of morality from religion, the ordinary non-philosophic man has never at any time felt that morality can really be severed from religion. Amongst the least developed of men offences against religion and morality have been alike taboo; and for the most developed there is no offence against God which is not a wrong to one's fellow-man, and no wrong to one's fellow-man which is not an offence against God—no immorality which is not sinful, no sin which is not immoral. On the other hand, as the Greek philosophers sought to develop a theory of morality which took no account of religion, so the Pharisees developed a theory of religious duty which permitted the neglect or avoidance of duty to their fellow-man.

For those who hold the faculty-theory of conscience, conscience is the faculty of forming correct moral judgments; its judgments are valid and final, precisely because they are the judgments of conscience; and those judgments are judgments of conscience which are valid and final. This argument is *teres atque rotundus*, for it is circular. Its rotundity is the reason why it is well-favoured; a man's moral judgments are necessarily right because he thinks them so, and he thinks them so because they are necessarily right. The idea is that conscience is infallible. In pre-Christian times there was, as in the non-Christian world there is, little indication of any active, popular demand for infallibility on any subject. In Christian times infallibility has been chiefly favoured, whether in matters of religion, morality, or science, by those who have at sundry times and in divers places felt themselves competent to supply it. An infallible Pope is provided by one section of Christianity. An infallible Bible has found favour with another. Some hanker after an infallible Church. A conscience which manifestly claims superiority manifestly claims infallibility. Science, which advances only on and by the ruin of abandoned hypotheses, is popularly supposed to be infallible; "scientific truth" is a phrase in which the adjective is either intended or imagined to indicate a kind of truth superior to any other.

Obviously these various claims to infallibility must be, as in fact they are, in different quarters, subjected to examination. Here and now we are concerned only with the claims of conscience to be regarded as infallible; and those claims are based, as has been said already, on the ground that conscience is a faculty. The faculty theory is, however, untenable. But, though there is no faculty of conscience, still all men do pass judgments on the actions of other men, and of themselves. The question therefore is how far such judgments are valid. And, inasmuch as those judgments differ, they cannot all be equally valid. That is true of the judgments of different individuals at the present day: one man allows himself to do what another does not and cannot believe to be right. And this difference is observable not only in the case of individuals but of whole communities. Not only does one community differ from another, or one individual from another, but the same community, as a whole, may at one time approve what at a later time it emphatically disapproves; for example, polygamy or slavery. A whole community may come to condemn actions which it once performed, or institutions which it once upheld; and, as what has once happened may happen again, it is conceivable that institutions now maintained as obviously right may in the future come to be condemned. The institution of private property is even now admitted to be liable to grave abuse, as was the institution of slavery before the agitation for its abolition began.

A man may claim to do what he likes with his own money, just as the slave-owner claimed to do what he liked with his own slaves. But the claim in both cases, though not as yet to the same degree, is judged to be immoral. Possibly in course of time the institution of private property may come to be regarded as belonging to the same class as the institutions of slavery and polygamy, and be in the future condemned as they are now. At the present day, however, the community is not aware, is certainly far from being fully aware, that in maintaining the institution of private property it is doing wrong.

Like the communities, the individual also at one time may not feel that what he is doing is wrong, and afterwards may be convinced that it was wrong, and may unfeignedly wish he had not done what he did do. This, however, is clearly to be distinguished from doing what at the moment of action one feels to be wrong: the polygamist of the Old Testament, or the slave-holder in Christian times, did not judge that he was doing wrong in having many wives or slaves. He judged he was doing right. Are we then to say that what he did was right? or that he misjudged? We, feeling that what he did was wrong, feel that he misjudged the case; and so we are led to ask ourselves, why should we suppose that a man's judgments on a moral matter must be right if he thinks them so, while we admit that scientific judgments are not necessarily right but are always subject to revision and correction? If a man may misjudge in the one case, why not in the other? Evidently judgments may be honestly and conscientiously believed to be right which are not so. The fact that the belief is conscientiously and honestly entertained does not guarantee the correctness of the belief: what it does do is to indicate that the man desires to know the truth, and to do what is right. And that is a condition—an indispensable condition—of moral progress. The very conception of progress implies that there is no such thing as an infallible conscience, for it implies that the stage left behind was less good, or more evil, than that which is subsequently attained; and also that that which is attained may not be the highest attainable—that at all stages and periods we know but in part, and are never infallible. Thus much humility at least is indispensable, if progress is to be possible. And so much humility is not to be expected of a man who supposes himself possessed of an organ of infallibility.

Evolutionary Ethics may imply that there is moral progress, or may imply that of two contradictory judgments or moral matters either judgment is as valid as the other. If the latter implication be accepted, then it follows that moral judgments have no validity; for to say that contradictory judgments on

moral matters are equally valid is the same thing as saying that both are equally invalid. On this view Evolution is conceived as being change simply: everything is transient, there is no principle of permanence. It is, then, not merely difficult to discover what is right. It is impossible to do so, for there is nothing which is, in fact and in truth, right. There are indeed opinions which, like everything else, are subject to evolution. But those opinions not only (on this view) must change, if they are to exist, but their very existence is change and nothing else. They neither indicate, nor even allow us to suppose, that they are based on anything abiding. They may and do fluctuate, but they do not advance. The judgment which affirms slavery or polygamy or military service to be right has neither more nor less validity than the contradictory judgment.

On the other hand, if Evolutionary Ethics be taken to imply the possibility and actuality of moral progress, then we require some authoritative standard of morality, by which we may measure advance, and on which each of us can rely, and to which each of us may and should bow. We come therefore now to the next question submitted to us for discussion, viz., the relation between conscience and external authority.

Moral judgments are not merely intellectual but are also emotional.

Emotionally conscience, which makes cowards of us all, manifests itself mainly as fear of punishment—and the child is taught by its elders thus to fear. But the elders themselves fear—and the fear they feel is fear of the unknown, and is expressed in the earlier stages of the development of man in taboo. Violation of taboo is felt to be mysteriously dangerous to the community—and is therefore a danger against which the community protects itself by threatening and inflicting punishment on the offender.

But though the punishment may be dreaded, it is the offence which is inherently dreadful: it is the offence and not the punishment which is really to be dreaded. Punishment would never have been inflicted by the community had not the offence

been felt to be something that ought not to be committed. Here it is that comes in judgment—moral judgment: the community judges what actions ought to be avoided. And here, too, variety comes in, for different communities, or the same community at different times, judge differently. But the bottom fact is the future, that there are things which should not—and indeed must not—be done, that there are things right to do, and things wrong to do. And it is the doing of things wrong that is dreaded.

Hence morality is negative at first: "thou shalt not." Next is added "for fear lest"—and then punishments human and divine are specified. When specified, the punishments come to be regarded as the reason for abstaining, but as a matter of historical fact they were not the original reason. And the reason why the community believes that the acts prohibited are to be avoided is that each member feels that they are to be avoided—there is action and re-action of the members of the community on each other—the elders act upon the child, and he, when adult, re-acts upon his children. Conscience then is not fear of punishment but fear of doing wrong. Fear of punishment, human or divine, is not fear of doing wrong; and action from fear of punishment is not the same as action from the conviction that such and such things are wrong. Here it is necessary to guard against the notion that wrong acts are felt to be simply such acts as are punished by man: acts which are punished by the gods (or originally are objects of mysterious dread) are as wrong as those punished by society—and may even come to be considered (erroneously) as more wrong. It is not the case that originally the only acts considered wrong are those punished by man—that is a mistake which has its origin in the error of considering that conscience is nothing more or other than fear of punishment—which amounts to denying that man has any sense of the fundamental difference between right and wrong.

An external authority, such as the State, only has power to punish and reward: and to make of God an authority having

such power is to make Him an external authority. Of course such has been in the past, and even now is the belief of many about Him—and the corresponding view about conscience is that it is fear of punishment. That is, in fact, the relation between conscience and external authority. An authority is of necessity external and the link is fear—the binding force of the link is fear—there is no union, no possibility of identifying oneself with the object of one's fear. For the bond of fear must be substituted a tie more intimate—the union of love. This has never been entirely absent from religion : the gods have always been trusted. But this aspect is, as a rule, not predominant in religions other than Christianity.

Where the relation of conscience to an external authority, such as the State or the Church, is one of opposition, it is open to the owner of the conscience to believe that his conscience is the voice of God. But in such cases, *e.g.,* in the case of the Holy Inquisition, it is equally possible to assert that it is through the Church the voice of God is speaking. And, as we have seen, there is no reason for believing that infallibility appertains either to the individual or the State or the Church. But though it is open to the owner of a conscience to believe that his conscience is the voice of God, and that the conscience of those who differ from him is not, there is no reason why he should seek, thus invidiously, to bolster up his conscience in this way. It is, on the contrary, rather topsy-turvy of him to make the attempt. What he feels to be right, he feels to be right; and that is the reason why he holds it to be the pronouncement of God. He does not begin by accepting some divine pronouncement as the criterion of what is right, but starts from the position that, what his conscience tells him, that is right; and he concludes that, because it is infallibly right, therefore it is the voice of God.

The believer in conscience—in the faculty of forming infallible judgments on matters of morality—accepts, if he does accept, the teaching of Christ because it appeals to and satisfies his conscience. His conscience (he supposes) has authority to judge

the appeal made to it by the founder of any religion. For those who recognise that the faculty-theory is philosophically untenable aud do not imagine themselves possessed of any infallible faculty of any kind, the last question proposed for our discussion—"Do we accept the teaching of Christ because it appeals to our conscience, or because it is imposed upon us by His authority?"—is a question which, to be answered properly, must be worded properly. As it stands, it implies that the teaching of Christ to be accepted must be accepted either because it appeals to our conscience or because it is imposed upon us by authority. But these are not the only alternatives. It is not the case that, if we decline to imagine we have any infallible faculties, we are forced to suppose that the teaching of Christ is imposed upon us by authority. There remains the alternative possibility that we may accept the teaching as it was given—freely, and in the spirit of love.

The only person who can ultimately decide what an agent shall do is the agent himself. Some other person may issue a command to him, and may reinforce the command by threats of punishment or promise of reward. But, even so, it rests with the agent to decide whether the threat or promise is enough to induce him to act in the way wished by the external authority. He does, in fact, always eventually decide the question. He may act from fear of punishment or hope of reward. But it is a mistake to imagine he must act from one or the other: he may act, as the parent or child often does, purely from love. It is conceivable that a person should always act from love; but a person who should always and without exception so act would be felt to be a divine personality.

A divine personality, it is felt, by his nature is one who acts neither from fear of punishment, nor from hope of reward, nor from selfishness, but from love; and the more nearly a human personality approaches to so acting, the more manifest becomes the divine element within him. To conceive the Divine Personality, therefore, as an external authority issuing commands or promising rewards, is to conceive Him as wishing

others to act from motives different from His own. To imagine that human persons can only act from fear of punishment or hope of reward is to suppose that it is impossible for them to follow the example set by Him and act from love. And that supposition is contrary to the teaching of Christ, for what is fundamental therein is love (not fear of punishment or hope of reward)—love of God and man.

It is true that "a certain lawyer" found it "written in the law" that "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul . . . . and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke x. 27); and it is true that in the O.T. these imperatives are understood as commandments. It is true also that Christ speaks in the imperative mood, when he says to the lawyer, "This do and thou shalt live." But it is also true that the mood, which by grammarians is termed the imperative mood, is not used merely for making commands or issuing orders. "Have mercy upon us" is a sentence in the imperative mood, but it is not a command: it is an appeal. The mood is called by grammarians imperative, not because it always or of necessity expresses a command, but because by it alone can commands be expressed; just as in Greek grammar the optative mood is so called, not because it expresses wishes only—that is its least frequent use—but because it is the only mood in which a wish can be uttered. The fact therefore, that Christ's words, "This do," are in the imperative mood is not enough, by itself, to show that they are to be understood as a command. It is, however, natural enough to interpret His words by their context; and to regard them as a command, because "Thou shalt love," &c., is plainly a command, written in the law of the O.T. But so to interpret the words is to overlook the whole difference between the old dispensation and the new. The old dispensation was based upon the law and its commands: the new substitutes for it love—and love cannot be commanded.

Christ's teaching, in word and deed, is that to live is to act from love of God and of one's neighbour. By example and precept He taught that the fundamental and ultimate value in

life is love. His life is the revelation of that truth; and for every Christian that revelation begins when he begins to realise the love of Christ. Love is not, and cannot be imposed by authority; and so far from having anything to do with any "principle by which we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper, and actions," it is that absolute forgetfulness of self by which alone self-realisation is possible. The notion that the world of men should be governed by some written law, or that some faculty has manifest authority to govern the world, is absolutely opposed to the Christian teaching that to live is to act not in obedience to authority, but from love—love of God and of one's neighbour.

Love is the fundamental and ultimate value in life. It is, that is to say, the value to which all other claims to value must be referred, and by which they must all be tested. But no man may set up the love to which he has happened to attain as the ultimate value by which all others are to be tested. No Christian, at any rate, should thus exalt himself—or mistake what he is pleased to call his conscience for the ultimate test of value. "There is none good, save God." The fundamental and ultimate value in life is love: but we must remember that "God is love." The mistake is easy but fatal to suppose that such love as a man may have attained to is God.

The justification which science has for abandoning hypotheses it once held is the faith that with the truth all things will agree: that is the ultimate test of truth, and, being ultimate, it is a test that has not yet been finally applied. So, too, love is the ultimate test of all values, and a man is mistaken when he imagines he has finally applied it. The fatal error of setting up the imaginary faculty of conscience is that the believer in conscience imagines he can apply it finally and infallibly. Then, having ascribed finality and infallibility to his judgment in moral matters, or, as he erroneously puts it, to his conscience, he supposes he can judge what is right. If he judges love to be right, then it is so in his opinion, not because it is love, but because it commends itself to his conscience: if it did not

commend itself to his conscience, it would not be right. He supposes himself to act as he does, because his conscience so commands him, and not (save in so far as man acts from mixed motives) from love. But, were his motive, as he could wish it to be, purely conscientious, it would not be admixed with love. His ideal therefore is not love of God and man, but obedience to the commands of conscience—his conscience, of course, not anybody else's.

Christ's teaching that to love God and one's neighbour is the way and the life, is first accepted in faith. Faith, however, in proportion as we learn to stake our lives, and all that we have upon it, becomes personal certainty—a certainty which we cannot learn from others, which cannot be transmitted by custom or handed down by tradition, but which must grow up in the individual as the fruit of his own labour, and what he has lived through. The personal certainty which thus grows up is the certainty that love of God and one's neighbour is the supreme value by which all other values are to be tested. That certainty, however, differs *toto caelo* from the confidence of the man who imagines himself possessed of a conscience whose judgments are final and infallible. Such a man heeds no physician, because he is satisfied he needs none. They that are whole have, of course, no need of any physician.

CONSCIENCE AND AUTHORITY.

By Miss Dougall, Author of *Pro Christo et Ecclesia*, &c.

Canon Rashdall begins his recent most interesting book by telling us that a philosopher of any school which does not explain away moral distinctions "invariably assumes that it is possible to find out what is right and what is wrong by an appeal to some power, faculty or activity of the human mind."

The Dean of St. Paul's, in a recent sermon reported in *The Challenge*, July 14th, speaks of "the conscience, that inward monitor which is the still, small voice of the spirit of God."

The modern mind seems shut up to two conceptions of conscience: either it is an exercise of human judgment, or men in their moral efforts come into actual touch with the living God. If conscience is simply human judgment at its best, we need to retract all assertions of its infallibility, but can we at the same time account for the curious sense of ultimate value which men get in obeying its dictates? If, on the other hand, conscience is in any real sense "the voice of God in the individual soul," we need to make such a doctrine comprehensible and welcome by a more liberal doctrine of the Holy Ghost, an explicit conception of the indwelling of God as being as universal to humanity as the moral consciousness is universal.

II.

Mr. Clutton Brock has lately written a most suggestive little book, *The Ultimate Belief*, in which he desires to affirm the triune nature of the human conscience. He says (p. 21):—

> "The spirit has three activities and three alone, as it has three desires, viz., the moral, the intellectual, and the aesthetic activities."

Again (p. 24):—

> "The common belief of most teachers and moralists in England is that there is only one activity of the spirit—the moral—that we must do good for the sake of doing good, and for no other reasons; and the intellectual and aesthetic activities are subsidiary to the moral, and not really spiritual at all."

Again (p. 38):—

> "You must recognise and exercise all three spiritual activities if you would exercise any one of them quite naturally and rightly. In fact, each conscience is aware of its kinship with the other two, and each is itself a way to the other two."

We have in the word conscience two distinct conceptions—the sense of obligation to do—the sense of "ought," and the perception of what is right to do. I want now to consider first the latter, and discuss this power of perceiving what is of ultimate value in the circumstances of our lives.

Let us first take the power of recognising beauty. Psychologists tell us that normal men are capable of some degree of aesthetic education; the difference between them in this respect is not one of kind but of degree. Some capacity common to

humanity can recognise the truth of certain principles or canons of art whenever they are understood. Further, without any consciously acquired aesthetic education, all normal men have certain perceptions of beauty and ugliness, and are attracted by what they count beauty and repelled by its lack. That this aesthetic conscience is as universal as the power to be moral and religious is suggested by the increase in refinement which invariably marks the religious convert taken from the "submerged tenth." One man, who had worked for years in an evangelical mission for the rescue of drunkards and criminals, used to say that he could quickly tell the deep from the shallow religious experience, because those whom he considered "soundly converted" became nature's gentlemen and ladies; and my own observation has confirmed the truth of this.

The desire for beauty, the perception of beauty, is common to humanity, but the question arises, how far can we assert that there is in every man a capacity or power which can in every case decide what is beautiful.

For every practical purpose it seems more important to emphasise the fallibility of the subjective notion of beauty than to affirm its validity, although it undoubtedly has validity, for without admitting that, art could not exist. Yet no theory of aesthetic values can be taught on authority. The man who accepts beauty on authority *never* sees it. It must be learned by *experiment*, by research. The student of art is taught to *discover*.

Then as to *truth*. When we come to what Mr. Clutton Brock calls "the conscience of the scientist" we have a parallel set of facts. In their capacity to learn the exact sciences, men again do not differ in kind, only in degree. Simple arithmetical truths, and the cogency of the syllogism, appeal to all normal men. The power to relate facts and reason from the known to the unknown is a human attribute without which no science would be possible. Yet in the biological sciences we find men give with equal honesty and conviction different interpretations of comparatively simple groups of facts, and in the sciences of

ethics and history we all know how wide such divergence may be.

Do these facts warrant our laying stress on the importance of subjective truth? It is undoubtedly true that a man ought to hold to what is true to him till his vision changes. A man who disregarded his own perceptions of truth could learn nothing. As a matter of fact he will trust to what appears to him to be truth, whether he is told to trust it or not. The main emphasis of the teacher must be laid upon the obligation to discover fresh truth, to relate all that has been accepted to what is being constantly acquired, so that one bit of knowledge may confirm or discredit another.

It is this constant push forward to new discovery in scientific and artistic life, this constant effort to revise what has been accepted in the light of each fresh discovery, that makes these pursuits so vigorous and so vital.

It certainly seems that we want something of this vitality and push of discovery in the moral life. The eagerness for fresh knowledge, the patient revision of all formerly acquired ideas in the light of each further advance—which is natural to men in the pursuit of truth and beauty—does not characterize the average moral man in his moral life. It is possible that by abstracting from all other human powers (which depend on education and experience) the power of moral perception, and elevating it as the divine voice, innate and independent of education, and elevating the importance of the subjective right, we may have contributed to the general moral inertia. By offering the authority of Church or State as the only alternative we shall only provoke unreasoning rebellion.

III.

But do the facts of life warrant the belief that there is an objective standard of beauty and truth and right such as we can call "the ultimate good?"

Everyone agrees that there appears to be in all men a certain intuitive perception that they have a duty toward righteousness, truth and beauty, a sense of "ought," which is that part of the

meaning of the word "conscience" we are not now considering; and further, they have a certain power to conceive certain aspects and fragments of a right or good which would seem to be itself a perfect whole; which, as a whole, eludes the grasp both of the individual and the community, but which challenges discovery.

The existence of this ideal righteousness, this complete and perfect good outside of ourselves, cannot be proved from the facts of life, but they seem to warrant our belief in its existence because it is the only hypothesis which accounts for the hunger and thirst of the human spirit for the realization of what has ultimate value; it also explains the constant foretaste of ultimate rightness that we get in doing anything for right's sake.

All the discrepancies in ethical thought do not invalidate the hypothesis that there is an objective standard of right; they only invalidate the belief that it is at present fully known.

IV.

Our next question is, granted that there is the objective standard of human rightness, how far has man the power in his own soul of perceiving in any set of circumstances that application of the standard to his own case, and how to apply it? If only God knows the objective standard, is the application for us a matter of inspiration?

We have seen that we do not lay much stress upon the value of individual taste in beauty or of the individual conception of what is true, although they have a certain value. Can we say that a man has a power or faculty which can perceive in each case how *e.g.* to apply the principle that love to one's neighbour demands honesty, more unerringly than he perceives the difference between beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood?

Observe that even the simple command, "Thou shalt not commit murder," produces no unanimity. We find that men differ greatly as to what is murder and what is the execution of justice, and what is the necessity of war and of self-defence or even of self-interest. One man wishes to see everyone

connected with a patriotic revolution executed for treason; another man regards every such execution as murder. One man fires swiftly at a burglar entering his house; another will run the greatest personal danger rather than do the burglar any permanent injury. One man will hold himself blameless while paying his workers starvation wages; another man accuses him of the murder of helpless men, women, and children in doing so. Then we have all those cases of convinced "righteous indignation" in which men slay their opponents, or the reputations of their opponents, believing that they are doing God service.

All the elaborate things which modern philosophers say about the development of the moral ideal and the enlightenment of conscience, do not, for the man in the street, reconcile the discrepancies of moral judgment in humanity with the commonly expressed belief that a knowledge of good and evil is inborn.

It is, of course, clear that in iniquitous circumstances, when a man is shut up to lines of action all more or less wrong, the least wicked course open to him is for him the right course, but it would be less confusing in such cases, and in many others, if we called the subjective right the "least wrong" or the "best possible," rather than apply to it the same word that we apply to conduct objectively correct. We should then mean by conscience, not only the impulse to do right, but also a fallible faculty by which men can often discover what is the best course to pursue. This sounds plausible, and perhaps it is sound as far as it goes, but it does not account for the sense of intuitive assurance, the sense of freedom from the oppression of circumstance, that so often accompanies the decision to act as we think right. Can this be adequately accounted for by anything less than the fact of that immediate contact with objective Divine right that makes for perfect freedom?

It is a great temptation at present, when we observe that the authority of Church or of Bible is undermined, to set up the moral authority of the community or State as ultimate, but

that is reactionary. Conscience must be the ultimate authority. We have been discussing only the faculty of moral vision; we now come to consider conscience as the sense of obligation to do what we see to be right. How explain the "ought" which commands in connection with this sense of moral freedom?

V.

This question of freedom in connection with what has always been called the authority of conscience is important.

Granting that it is of the very nature of will to be free, we find the human will restrained on all sides by outward circumstances and inward distraction. Complete outward freedom means the widest possible range of choice, which implies perfect knowledge and perfect opportunity. But freedom also means inward unity. (May I be pardoned if, at the risk of tediousness, I dwell upon this analysis of freedom?) We could not call any creature free who willed two opposing activities. Unity of the will is necessary to freedom, and such unification can probably only come in human souls by experiment in choice—whether the experiment be made in fact or in imagination.

If the self is not a homogeneous and consistent whole, it is clear that one part is under subjection to the other. As long as a man is conscious of struggle between a higher and a lower self, neither is in complete subjection to the other, neither is free, because both are impeded. True self-hood implies a unity. Men have not really found themselves while they are conscious of a struggle within. Thus, when we say men "find themselves" in a great purpose, or a great love, or in face of a great opportunity, we express a literal truth, and we imply another truth of equal importance—that the self is nothing except as related to other selves. Human spirits only exist and develop in relation to their fellows and to God. The word freedom would be meaningless in regard to a spirit alone in the universe. Because unity of spirit can only be realised by means of experiment, inward freedom, in its incipient stages as well as in the ideal, means freedom from external restraints.

It has, however, been largely assumed that man may be divided into three parts—body, mind, and spirit, and that his spirit possesses greatest freedom when his mind and body are in subjection; but we do not now seriously question the fact that mind and spirit are one, and that freedom of thought is necessary to the greatest possible degree of moral freedom. We are, however, still inclined to question the advantages of other sorts of liberty. We have been so busy for ages explaining to ourselves that man is more free under good law and good direction than he could be in the actual world without either, that we are very apt to imagine vaguely that being under authority and being free are two aspects of the same thing.

Some people love to call this a great paradox, because they won't or can't take the trouble to think about it. Though a man is more free under reasonable direction or restraint than in a state where over-reaching neighbours have the chance to molest him, more free under one consistent rule of conduct than when several conflicting rules of conduct confuse and stultify his actions, more free when the slave of one God than when the slave of many, yet it remains true that perfect freedom is the absence of restraint. We cannot be under authority and be entirely free.

We all agree that while our freedom is now limited, some degree of freedom is necessary to morality; but much of our religious and moral teaching has curiously overlooked the fact that the greatest degree of external freedom is necessary to the greatest morality. In other words, it is only so far as we are free outwardly and inwardly that we are moral, and the purpose—if we admit purpose in creation—must therefore be the production in us of perfect or absolute freedom.

At present it is obviously true—I quote Dr. Rashdall—that

> "The great majority of individuals in the great majority of their actions cannot possibly decide for themselves about their rightness or wrongness in the way that is often assumed to be possible in the abstract discussions of moral philosophers. . . . Even when we turn to the developed intelligence in its most reflective moments, we at once

recognise that the behaviour of most men in most circumstances is determined (in so far as it is based upon consciously accepted ethical principles) by rules which are not due to the independent working of their own intellect, but have been handed down by social tradition and are imposed upon them by a social environment."*

When the individual is guided in his conduct by social tradition, he is not free, and only partially moral. When Huckleberry Finn helped his aunt's ill-treated slave to escape, he suffered all the disagreeableness of being afraid his aunt would find out and being certain he would go to hell, because the conscience of his community upheld the rights of even the cruel slave-owner. Here the restraint upon moral freedom was mental, but it was none the less a restraint.

We are all inclined to see this with regard to mental restraints upon moral freedom. Let us now consider in what sense coercion of the body involves loss of moral freedom. It is because of the reaction of body on mind that physical freedom—*i.e.*, political freedom—is requisite to complete moral freedom. A man, for example, who is obliged to work twelve hours a day at something for which he has no aptitude, or in which he can take no interest, for the sake of a meagre living, is restrained by bodily exhaustion from acquiring knowledge that would liberate his thoughts. He is morally as well as physically enslaved. He is morally free to be patient and painstaking, and to exercise several other virtues, but there are many manly virtues he is not free to develop. It goes without saying that if he lives the best life he can under such conditions he is not blameworthy; but we are not here discussing moral development. No one would deny that the Habeas Corpus Act, on which our physical liberty is founded, has an immense bearing on our moral development.

All this may sound so trite as to be absurd, but my point is that if the terms used with regard to conscience make it appear to the unlearned as a restriction of true freedom, a type of conscientious life will be developed which will be inimical to freedom, and the best type of men will sneer at conscience.

Conscience and Christ, pp. 16-17.

VI.

It is very necessary to formulate the doctrine of conscience in a way that exalts freedom. Freedom is a spiritual conception which transmutes the whole of life, and when a body of men have gained the conception it is futile to teach them a morality which does not exalt it.

We may get a glimpse of the supreme value of freedom in another way. If we believe that this world is the action of a Creator we must, in face of the evil in it, either believe that there is no real distinction between good and evil, or that the Creator creates good and bad indiscriminately, or that, in creating moral beings, He risked the sum of the world's evil—as we humanly say—and took the consequences. I do not believe it possible to found morality on the belief that God created sin and suffering as the best means to His end. If morality means anything it means that much happens in this world that ought not to happen—that God does not will to happen. Without this belief the judgment of conscience upon wrong acts would be meaningless.

If freedom is a reality, if moral responsibility is a reality, the value of freedom must inhere in any true doctrine of conscience.

In recalling this basal fact of Christian thought, I only want to point out how costly the freedom is. We cannot, if we are Christians, believe God to be impassible. Long before Christianity came upon the scene a great Hebrew prophet cried: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." All the extreme statements that religious teachers have made concerning the price God paid for man's salvation may truly be said of the price He pays for their freedom. If the Cross means anything it means that love shares, must always share, all the consequences of the wrong choice of others, and suffers in proportion to its intensity and purity. We see this in all human love. We can form no conception of God's character which could include any love we can understand and exclude passion.

Almost all writings about conscience contain the word law, and the commonest meaning of the word being "the command of a superior," it is not surprising that it is a common idea that conscience commands obedience to laws in the making of which the person commanded has had no share. "The duty of obeying conscience" is a phrase probably used to-day by every teacher in the land: how many children or ordinary people connect the words "duty" and "obedience" with the idea of freedom?

This trouble does not arise from what any good teaching means to inculcate, still less from the explanations of our ethical writers, who give us excellent books; it arises from the continued use of a phraseology which has ceased to appeal to the highest ideals of the plain man.

The trouble is that we come of generations who conceived the kingdom and power and glory they attributed to God in terms of court splendour, military pageants, and legal systems. Morality they naturally conceived in legal terms; hence they did not aim at a moral growth which would be like the growth of the lilies in the field; the legal righteousness of which they talked seems to us much more aptly likened to Solomon's gaudy dress. They probably meant in their hearts much the same thing that we mean, but they put it in words we ought not to use.

If we are told that a man is bound, whether he wish or not, to live in the house of some potentate who prescribes rules which cover his every action, and that these will only be broken at cost of punishment, should we think of calling such a man free? He is, of course, free to defy the potentate, and suffer punishment, or free to obey the prescribed rules in one spirit or another, but this is so limited a degree of freedom that we call it slavery. It does not really make any difference to our judgment if we call the potentate God and His house the world, although if we believe that God's government is truly described thus we are apt to be less frank with ourselves. It means slavery to us, and if we believe what we say, and do not rebel,

but take the attitude of slaves, men who love freedom are repelled by our attitude—repelled from us, and repelled from God.

Christianity came into the world trailing clouds of glory, but the shades of a prison-house have obscured this glory from us. A legal morality has evolved a legal God, a legal Christ, and a legal mediating Spirit; and this false conception of the Divine is again reflected in our sense of right, and written large on our doctrine of conscience. We conceive of the divine Spirit as dependent upon ceremonies or upon certain conscious religious attitudes of mind, for its presence among men.

But men have discovered that life is not legal. It is the power that assimilates such inanimate matter as can with advantage be coerced by intelligence, and turns it into lovely organic forms, no one of which is ever exactly like another, no one part of which is ever the duplicate of another. Such a living thing follows only what we call the law of its own being, not any super-imposed rule. Life has fashioned human intelligence out of the dust of ages, until the very forces of earth, air, and water are being gradually subdued by man. Men in this generation are becoming conscious of the sovereignty and power and glory of informing life. They feel that they are created to grow and develop according to the law of their own nature. They need the doctrine of the moral consciousness explained in terms of life. They are no longer ready to attribute kingdom and power and glory to a God who rules by external authority. Their hearts are aching for the knowledge of a God who can help without enslaving them. They may or may not be conscious of any thought about God, but their ideal is indicated in their rejection of an arbitrary moral law, expressed in the traditional view of conscience. If they could be taught that in their natural feeling of obligation to do right, and not wrong, they had the sign and seal of Divine friendliness, and that in proportion as they sought rightness in any of its forms with simplicity, they opened their being to the veritable touch of the living God, and that this touch would enable them to see visions of right that

would draw them forward by an irresistible attraction, this teaching would re-vitalize the moral life. Such teaching is more true to the facts of experience than the statement that there is within us a power or faculty which issues commands which man is slow to obey, but for disobedience to which he will be penalized.

VIII.

To make the doctrine of conscience a living and revivifying truth, I feel sure that we have to teach it so as to make the old phrase "The voice of God in the soul" stand for something comprehensible and welcome. In remonstrating with a tramp who, resting in his dirty rags under our hayrick and half drunk, throws a smouldering match into the fringes of the dry grass, we do not hesitate to appeal to his conscience; but we hesitate to tell him that the great Divine Spirit of Love is with him and would have made a more careful disposition of the match seem desirable to him if he would have allowed himself to be so inspired. The latter appeal is no more impertinent or personal than the former; it seems so only because we are unfamiliar with the thought. The judge in condemning the lowest criminal, will often accuse him of having deadened the voice of conscience; he ought to be able to tell him, without any appearance of cant or folly, that God was with him all the time, and would have saved him from his present distress had he recognised and taken pleasure in the Divine companionship. We cannot talk in this way now to tramps and criminals because the wrong notion of God has been so prevalent that the Holy Spirit means something exclusive—almost, we might say, religiously snobbish. Back of our teaching that conscience is either a queer, uncertain strain of infallible wisdom in the human outfit, or a serious calculation of right and wrong reckoned from the data of experience, lies a wrong conception of the Holy Ghost. I quote from a recent article by Dr. David Cairns in the *International Review of Missions*:—

> "Something has somewhere gone wrong with the common Christian thought of God. Be it remembered that if such a lapse were an almost universal lapse, affecting the life of the advanced Christian as

> well as the life of the beginner, affecting the life of the whole Church for many centuries and penetrating all its literature and works of devotion, it would be something which it would be almost impossible to detect, until some great common failure brought to light the common fall. We all inevitably judge our own conceptions of God and goodness by the standards which prevail in the society to which we belong, or if we go beyond these, by the venerable figures of the past. It is strange how under these influences we can all become blind to the one absolute Christian standard. It may take some great emergency of extreme personal or social need to drive us past all these existing or historical standards, to make us all forget our own wisdom as well as our own folly, and to bring us as simple disciples back again to the Galilean springtime."

In order to make the doctrine of conscience vital and purge it of untrue implications, we need to make the doctrine of the Holy Spirit so liberal that it will give some faint suggestion of the untold riches and liberality of God, that thus we may at least start men upon the track by which they may begin an ever-increasing knowledge of the unsearchable freedom of the Divine companionship. The old Hebrew conception of the Divine wisdom as manifested in all kinds of knowledge—in the power to apply knowledge in skill of handicraft and statecraft, must be brought back into Christian thought. We need to find words by which to make every child understand that the love of beauty, the desire for knowledge, the exercise of skill, are evidences of the life of God in the soul, and that in so far as men pursue any good with simplicity and with regard to the common welfare they will be enriched by the Divine Spirit, so that what we call the moral consciousness may become, in all innocent activities, the consciousness of God's companionship in every effort and every quest.

The daylight is not unreal to men because it is all-pervading. They do not become bored by it nor indifferent to it. The obscuring of a window brings invariable distress; a dark day—through storm or fog or eclipse—means conscious lowering of vitality. The love of the light is as universal and as strong as the light itself is common; and just as men naturally love light, and desire it when it is lacking, seek it by piercing their walls with windows and simulating the sunlight by candles

that shine in the night—just as this is natural to them, so it is natural to them to enjoy the God in whom they live and move and have their being, if they were taught to understand how universal and how persuasive is His inspiration, how true it is that always, everywhere, He seeks by gentle hints and drawings to make them great.

All this is true, although there are many men who, at many times, deliberately desire darkness because their deeds are evil and they deliberately desire evil. We all recognise that to desire darkness for any activity, and to desire evil for its own sake—*i.e.*, to desire ugliness recognised as ugliness, or falsehood recognised as falsehood, or injustice under the name of injustice—is something abnormal. Its abnormality stands out as proving the naturalness of the love of what we call right. Thus an appetite for natural right seems quite as much a part of the human outfit as an appetite for food. And whenever men simply and honestly seek to satisfy this appetite, they can be taught that they open their souls to the inspiration of the all-pervading spirit of Wisdom and Love. Just in the degree to which they are simple and honest in the activities prompted by their natural desire for good, just so far God will be in them, and their lives will manifest the happy knack that we call genius, whether in things social or things artistic or things scientific.

Such a doctrine of conscience would make the soul truly free. The Divine Spirit, rightly understood, does not issue laws; it does not crush or torture those who neglect it. It inspires glimpses of ultimate good, and then follows where the soul beckons, into the fields of truths or the gardens of beauty or the dwellings of love. It answers, giving glimpses of unutterable truth, whenever the soul has the wisdom to question. It awaits the beckoning; it awaits the questioning; its patient waiting evokes in the soul an ever wider and an ever deeper consciousness of freedom; it shows how all the bonds and chains of falsehood and vice may be broken and thrown aside, but the soul itself must break and cast them off.

The Divine Wisdom is indeed the very spirit of freedom. It imparts the desire for, and the consciousness of, freedom by the infection of its own nature; and there is but one condition of its continued companionship—that the soul shall go ever onwards to fresh experiences, fresh knowledge, fresh truth, fresh skill, and fresh love. From whatever is stagnant, from whatever is a mere revival of what has been, there rises a miasma which obscures the eyes of the soul so that it can no longer see Wisdom, no longer walk by the joy of its Divine Companionship.

It goes without saying that to make such a doctrine explicit, coherent and practical, many minds would need to give of their best, and many books would need to be written. The barest and most tentative suggestion only can be given here.

The dangers incident to the teaching of such a moral doctrine concerning human nature and its relation to God, would need to be guarded against by clear teaching on four points which occur to my mind at present.

(1) It would be much better to call the conscientious experience the "touch" rather than the "voice" of God. The nature of the moral experience is such as to heighten the natural powers of reason and emotion, and, at the most, it would be a sort of push, inclining the soul in the right direction. It cannot well be set forth under the figure of a voice or a word, because the message, when understood, will always be a mixed product, having in it a large element of the empirical.

(2) While every human being is different from every other, and each must have his own particular religious experience, the universality of the experience should be dwelt on in a way to prevent egotism, and incite to true humility.

Both these aspects of truth are important. Men know themselves to be different from others; if God take no interest in these differences His influence could not be welcomed or delighted in. But on that very ground all men are equally environed by the Divine companionship, and only if in some way de-humanized can they be regarded as without inspiration.

(3) It would appear most necessary to emphasize that the objective ideal of good, still unknown, must be a consistent inspiration towards unity, always drawing men toward agreement in the affirmation of positive values. The fear that a practical belief in universal individual inspiration would lead to want of cohesion in human affairs must be shown to be absurd.

(4) Finally, if the whole of life could be thought of as a religious experience, that need not invalidate what is now called religious experience. For example, if a man were trained from childhood to be conscious of the help of the Spirit in every innocent activity, he would, after conversion, if it were a valid experience, enjoy that consciousness more and develop more quickly a co-operation with the mind of God. To the sacramentally-minded the value of the Sacraments would be heightened, not altered; if the natural life is conceived as more divine, what is conceived as supernatural would begin on a higher level, and go further.

We should probably all subscribe to what Mr. Clutton Brock has emphasized—that conscience is rooted in the inborn desire of the soul for truth and beauty and righteousness, that probably every desire we experience is for these, although we often see them in a perverted and false form.

If, then, men might be taught that conscience is the faculty or power in and by which we can feel the touch of the Divine Spirit enabling us to perceive what will best satisfy our natures, if they could be taught that the feeling they have called obligation is the attraction of the good they thus perceive; that the yielding to this attraction is what has been called obedience to command; such a doctrine of conscience would certainly be more compatible with progress toward the moral freedom which is our goal. Such a doctrine would be both comprehensible and welcome to little children, and to toiling millions, and would tend to make goodness and religion one conception and one experience, which assuredly at present they are not.

THE ETHICS OF JESUS.

By Rev. G. H. Rendall, B.D., Litt.D., LL.D., sometime Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University and Headmaster of Charterhouse.

The preservation of the ethical teaching of Jesus is a speaking marvel. When we recall the circumstances and mode of exposition, so improvised, so incidental, so unsystematic, and so restricted in its circle of address, when we think of the status and the culture of the first hearers, still more when we reflect upon the channels of transmission, sayings and stories, detached and fragmentary, collected without help of written or verbatim notes, by second or third-hand writers to whom the personality of Jesus was not directly known, we cannot enough marvel at the coherence, the unity, and the completeness, which we find in the ethics of Jesus. Their sheer vitality has trimphed over obstacles which must, one would have said, proved fatal, clothed as they were in parable and metaphor, homely and picturesque couched in the proverbial and pithy forms of maxim, proverb and paradox, dear to the genius of Hebraism, or revealed in flashes of spiritual intuition "living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword," which laid a sure and instant hold on memory, they guarantee their own fidelity. Their ring is authentic and unmistakeable. They are interpenetrated through and through with personality and life; the saying and the deed, word and work, become inseparable wholes. The personality of Jesus pervades the precept, is communicated through it. The words reveal the character—a sure stamp of moral greatness. Catching his clear accents, and assimilating his words, we get living touch with the spirit of Jesus. Strange that it can be so. Yet the testimony of Christian experience

everywhere avouches it. Their preservation and their spell become a seal of authenticity. Because they were Christ's words, they were remembered, and remembered right, not from any formal sanction attached to the *ipse dixit* of the Master, but from the self-evidencing power of appeal belonging to the personality and utterance. They are wholly unsystematised; but none the less imply a unity of thought, reached, I would not say by "hard thinking," so much as by persistent spiritual strain and tension, whether exercised through prayer or meditation or questionings of experience, which availed to overbear the whole weight of prejudice, authority, or inherited assumptions, social or religious, which stood between man and the clear perception of the Divine. The Synoptists give us the more concrete and popular applications, but behind these must have lain deeper reaches of insight, corresponding to the type of the Johannine portraiture.

The characteristic notes of Rabbinic and Scribal teaching were tradition and complexity; those of Jesus, directness and simplicity. He simplifies the manifold requirements of the Law to the twofold demand—the first and great commandment, "Love of God;" and the second, *like unto it* (the phrase shows new insight), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the inseparableness, the realised and active harmony of these two commandments, He found a unity of moral aim and motive.

The standard of goodness lies outside, beyond us, in God alone. "None is good, save one, even God." But between God and man Jesus affirms and exhibits a reciprocity of conscious active love—the fatherhood of God and the sonship of man. In making the relation on either side immediate and personal, he likewise spiritualises it. "God is spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." In God love is no mere attribute, alternating with others; *every* act is one of love; it is the one moving energy, the key to all the mediate disciplines. In 'God is Love,' St. John finally sums up the ethical revelation of Jesus.

And from the side of man, correspondingly, all obligation resolves itself into a realisation and return of filial love. This transcends, and on occasion supersedes, all mediate obligations of rule or ritual. The end of Law is but to formulate the disposition of inner love.

So too with the practice of goodness. Righteousness *is* love. Love must find outlet, expression for its energies: that is the breath of its existence. In his *neighbour*, at once the outlet is provided, and the response, or rather that capacity for response, on which love feeds. Hence the *Beatitudes* upon 'the merciful,' 'the peacemakers,' 'the persecuted': 'the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to *give his soul* a ransom for many;' 'Ye also are bound, (are under obligation), to wash one another's feet.' It is the obligation of love, seeking and finding its own life. 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen.' Once again St. John crystallises in compact and clear form, the vital content of Christ's law of neighbourly love.

And the interchange of love, alike from God to man, from man to God, and from man to man, is *universalised.* God is no longer, as of old, father of Israel only, but of all nations and families of men. "He sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust." So also from man to man, "Love your *enemies:* bless them that curse you." The appeal, the range is as wide as humanity.

Taken in their entirety, the Ethics of Jesus have profound originality. And it is in its entirety that an ethical system must be judged. The raw material of Ethics lies in the fundamental instincts and impulses of man as a moral being. Their roots are in the past; there is no place in them for originality; an instinct or impulse new and peculiar to a single man would be a moral sport. The moral teacher does not create or invent moral energies, he directs or quickens those that exist, and turns them to vital use; and perhaps above all moral teachers, Jesus built upon the past, and made His appeal to

the simple, the unlearned, and the universal. Have ye never read—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou dost perfect praise?" It is no disproof of originality to collect parallel utterances from Jewish Rabbis, or Roman Stoics, from the Buddhist or Confucian. They count for little. Stoic originality lies not in discovery of new moral instincts or dispositions, but in their correlation with the central *pantheistic* thought of God; so, too, the originality of Jesus in their correlation with the personal fatherhood of God, and consequent co-sonship of men. And phrases, all but identical in terms, stand at far-distant poles of ethical and religious thought. The originality of Jesus lies in the new valuations, the new proportions, the new stimuli and directions given to moral dispositions, which other systems recognise; in the motives approved and the motives discarded; in the discrimination of true values from the false; of the permanent from the transient; of the spiritual from the material; of the eternal from the temporal; and in the ethical unity which results from these new values.

The result is an original creation. It is idle for piecemeal criticism to deny it. His teaching was *revolutionary*, and was recognised as such by Pharisees and Sadducees, by Herodians, by the whole environment in which he moved. Still more was it original, compared with any product of Greek or Roman ethos. And the whole history of Christian developments, from that day to this, proclaims incontrovertible originality—a cumulative proof, upon a world-wide scale, growing in volume every day, and still increasing in momentum.

About the scheme of virtues there is nothing makeshift or provisional. Above all schemes it insists upon eternal and spiritual values. It sets aside external and material goods, not because they are elusive or shortlived, but because compared with inward and spiritual satisfactions they become negligible. The term *Interim* Ethic has a certain cleverness, which has helped it to 'catch on,' but which when tested proves devoid of weight. It transfers to the field of ethics certain assump-

tions regarding expectations, of which those ethics themselves betray no influence. Its basis is the ascription to Jesus of forms of apocalyptic expectation, known to be current in his day—briefly, the inauguration of a visible kingdom upon earth, under the auspices of a Messiah potentate, in which the Israel of God would enter upon its sovereign inheritance, and all nations bow down to the sceptre and sway of a world-compelling righteousness.

First, then, it rests on the attempt to penetrate the Messianic consciousness of Jesus Christ. For that our materials are far too scanty and conflicting. We cannot accurately distinguish between His own beliefs, and the beliefs of those about Him. We cannot say how far these latter have been allowed to colour utterances assigned to His own lips. St. Matthew in the complexion set upon them goes further than St. Mark; St. Luke, and much more St. John, transmutes and re-interprets. The texts which the extreme eschatologists press so insistently are few, detached, and difficult. Their form in the primary record is doubtful. The interpretation forced upon them conflicts with other phases of expectation based on far more solid foundations of ethical conviction. They are used to discredit Christ's possession of any depth or permanence of moral insight; and the Ethics, which have re-made the world, so far as it has moved on lines of Christian morals and beliefs, are reduced in Tyrrell's phrase to '*incidental*' corollaries from a delusion which events disproved, and to which his death gave the culminating refutation.

Now, so far as we can read the evidence, and guess—we can no more—at the Messianic consciousness of Jesus, we find in it no fixed unalterable context. There were the Messianic expectations, among which He had been brought up: there was the conviction, finally authenticated at His Baptism, that, in His own person, the Messianic hope was to find its consummation; there was the gradual realisation of what Messiahship involved, how and through what channels it was to find expression. At the very earliest stage, if the Temptation

narrative is indeed the autobiographical expression of the consciousness of Jesus, He, once for all, surrendered the idea that "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" were to fall within the prerogative of the Messiah. Thenceforward it is His persistent aim to correct and to eliminate false elements, political and mundane, attaching to the Messianic hope. His more positive ideals—intermittent, tentative, conditioned by the occasion and outlook of those whom He addressed—wait, in docile trust, upon the leadings of spiritual experience. He set out with high hopes, aglow with that spiritual optimism which ever characterised His dealings with the individuals. First to Judaea, then to Galilee, then through the mission of the Seventy, He proclaimed the good news and the Kingdom; moments of elation attest the energy of His hopes. His greeting to the Seventy, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven," is the true counterpart to the commission "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come," on which the eschatologists build so pertinaciously. Step by step, experience chastened expectation, and He accepted its corrections. It is the path by which prophets, reformers, martyrs, have passed continually to their goal—"the valley of Achor for a door of hope." Jesus, even as they, "received not the promises." Rejected in Judaea, misunderstood in Galilee, diminished to a little company of followers, it was borne in on Him that in the suffering servant, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," lay the true type of the predicted Messiah; and, finally, He stood face to face with the unimaginable truth that the Messiahship meant *death*. To the eschatologist this denotes a more desperate hugging of delusions, even a gambler's throw, which challenged and met their final exposure on the Cross; and he is content to ignore the Resurrection, and the accidental bye-product of historic Christianity. But these omissions are stupendous, and give the lie to such conclusions. For Jesus himself no attested Resurrection was necessary, "the bosom of the Father" was enough. What was there to tempt Him back to the new-made

grave, or again, by that Jaffa gate, to pass "outside the city wall," or to relieve the doubts of Thomas, *except* the abiding urgency of His Incarnate love? That is the sole motive that runs through the appearances recorded. But, none the less, the Resurrection—possibly enough, in a way, unforeseen by Jesus, and here let us remember that all of prescience we impute is so much deduction from the field of faith—does vindicate the highest hopes and expectations He had cherished. It was a coming of the Son of Man which inaugurated there and then a kingdom, whose branches are even now covering the earth.

But, be this reading right or wrong, in any case the expectations of a seer do not gauge the value of his ethical judgments. These move in a different order: they stand or fall by the confirmation of man's moral consciousness, and the testings of experience. And nowhere that I know of can it be maintained that the ethics of Jesus find their basis in Messianic hopes, or delusions, or rewards, concerned with time. No invitation to surrender is based on shortness or insecurity of tenure; the young man is not pressed to sell his possessions, because the space for enjoyment is so brief; still less is "the cloke also" to be given, because all need of it will pass. The ethics are nowhere governed or determined by the eschatological motive, any more than by the miraculous. Where the imminence of the coming is introduced, it is only to accentuate the importance of an inward and moral change, of repentance, watchfulness, or energy in service. Never were ethics more regardless of prudential, temporising considerations; the charge brought against them has usually been of too uncompromising other-worldliness.

There is only one sense in which the teaching of Jesus can be truly called an *Interim* Ethic, and that, observe, is a denial, not an acceptance, of the eschatologist position. Its goal is the supremacy of that Kingdom, which it proclaims; when once that is attained, and the "Kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ," then

indeed many of the conditions of the stage of struggle will have grown obsolete. False Christs, false prophets will have had their day; wars will have ceased and rumours of wars; and "the end will come." But in that sense the nineteen centuries of Christian advance are but the first stage of the *Interim*.

Meanwhile, for the individual life, the Ethics of Christ continue to command the expanding moral consciousness of man. I cannot linger upon details[1] of perverse or captious exegesis, which wrests parable or figure from its true intent, or which applies to Oriental metaphor and phrase a literalism which is foreign to its genius. The objections themselves, one may observe, are for the most part drawn from the ethical armoury of Christ; his authority is used to discredit his recorded teaching—which surely points to flaws in the record, or the interpretation. The one serious difficulty on a large scale seems to me the silence of Christ upon large issues of social morality. Frankly, it is not what we should have expected. Our instinct is to crave authoritative guidance from without, some fountain of infallibility. But the course of revelation does not obey or follow our anticipations; from end to end it is a succession of surprises. And in retrospect we are, I think, able to understand. "What I do, thou knowest (οἶδας) not now, but thou shalt understand (γνώσῃ) hereafter." In things spiritual, as in all else, Christ "humbled Himself" to the first primary elements, to be realised in the individual life. Larger ambitions he laid aside. He was content to place on sure foundations the right relation of the individual before God, and of the individual man to individual man. Each he defined as "love." The religion of Christ is *at its base* an individualistic religion, an ethic of personal holiness, left to work out its consequences in the field of social relations. This surely relieves Christian Ethic from the charge of imposing a stationary ideal, which fetters or bars the way to progress. It *opens* it. For the whole field of applications, adaptations, experiment, correction and revision of experience is left open to free

[1] For brief systematic treatment, see Rashdall's *Conscience and Christ*, pp. 134-194.

Christian initiative. Enough for Christ to communicate the impulse, to introduce the leaven, to become in each believer "a still small voice" without asking to prescribe or forestall the saving fruits of man's own endeavour, experiments and aspirations.

Inherently, we must remember, and in its essence, love is a *personal* relation. Like gravity, it is a reaction of atom on atom, not of mass on mass. As atoms combine in groups, the interactions grow infinitely complex and multitudinous; but the one principle underlies and controls all. Love to God and love to neighbour, rightly and fully apprehended, cover the whole ground; and will enable men to order their societies upon the basis laid down by Christ. Each day those social relations become more manifold and intricate; and we gain nothing, we lose much, by imputing to Christ some suppressed and hidden prescience of unattained conditions. Prescience of a Divinely ordered future means so much reduction of the scope of faith. As I have said, to "commend his spirit to the Father" on the Cross would mean less, not more, if he foresaw the mode of the Resurrection and its results.

The circumstances of his incarnate life provided no opening for a social programme, that would have permanently satisfied the evolving social moral sense. To take a single instance: to have proclaimed the maintenance, or the abolition, of slavery would equally have been disastrous.

Herein Christ shows himself at one with God; the whole course of redemption is achieved by man exercising *his own* will and vision, God-ward. God gives the power of will; and does not cancel his gift by coercion or dictation. We "learn by suffering." Only by solving each new problem and perplexity as it arises, does man make moral progress and win higher insight. As believers in Christ we have only in all sincerity to ask—Is each new advance a clear outcome or legitimate deduction from the principles which he laid down? If so, our faith in him holds fast.

Let me close with an illustration from to-day. Under the pressure of current events, Loisy declares himself driven to abjure belief in Christ. "The Gospel stands convicted of impotence to realise his ideal," the Church has abdicated all claim to ethical authority, "the religion which is most alive, which for a great number of people is the only living one, is not the Christian faith, but devotion to one's country." Loisy's one hope of a solution lies in the adoption of "*an exalted patriotism*, reverting towards the religions of antiquity, and reaching forth to an ideal that can and should go far beyond Christianity itself." But where, in ancient or contemporary patriotism, does Loisy perceive a corrective panacea against self-abuse? Where is it, but in that more comprehensive brotherhood, which transcends those national unities which Christian belief has done so much to create and vitalise, but which can attain their end only in that Christ in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," and who alone holds out to struggling humanity an effective hope and promise of becoming at last "one man in Christ Jesus." The Ethic of Jesus is the antidote to that very defect in patriotism, which by the open renunciation of Christian principles has brought us to such huge disaster. Therein anti-Christian, not Christian, morality stands discredited. But only by realising the applications can we approve ourselves good Christians.

THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF CHRIST IN RELATION TO HUMAN SOCIETY.

By the Rev. R. B. Tollinton, D.D., Rector of Tendring.

I.

There is little inclination in the men and women of this generation to seek for their ideals or their authorities in the past. Science and democracy have their faces set towards the future. The social reformer is concerned with to-day's problems and recognises, in dealing with them, only those principles which can be proved valid for to-day. The Christian Church, which might seem to be an exception, is not infrequently hampered and trammelled in her service and activities by the very abundance of her traditions and her heritage. And it may be said at the opening of our subject that if the ethical teaching of Christ has value for human society under existing conditions, this is because, or in so far as, it is in accordance with the most widely prevalent moral convictions of our day. A saying of the Lord, proved genuinely His by the most careful critical investigation, would be ignored and quite inoperative if it were at variance with the trend of modern feeling on any given subject.

Again, it is well to recognise, in approaching our subject, that Jesus did not give the world a new ethical system. It was no part of His purpose to leave us a detailed scheme and code. His moral teaching came rather in the form of great intuitions, and it is always difficult to disentangle the purely ethical element from its religious context. Some of His most important utterances had their occasion in His contact with particular persons, and have consequently an individual reference and

meaning, nor is it a simple matter to discern the general principle implied in such words as those of the Lord's admonition to the young ruler, or of His reply to the man who desired first to go and bury his father, before he started to preach the Kingdom of God. No doubt we may, and it is a legitimate procedure, take even the most special and particular elements in the Lord's teaching and transpose them into general moral principles. So may the words spoken in Galilee be made available for modern London or for ancient and modern Oxford, and the different elements so appropriated may be constructed into a sort of ethical scheme. In like manner have metaphysics and socialism been also discovered in the Gospel. Something, however, is lost in the transposition; the colour, the setting, the directness, the personality are gone, and when we have proved that our particular proposals for righting the wrongs of human society are really discoverable in the Sermon on the Mount, we have to allow, on reflection, that they no longer retain the peculiar moral beauty and the distinctive power of appeal, which still cling to the recorded words of Jesus, and were certainly among His strongest characteristics as a teacher.

These and other similar considerations confront us when we attempt to estimate the value of the ethical teaching of the Lord for human society, as we find it in our own century. What I attempt in the present paper is to give examples of certain elements or aspects of this teaching, when estimated according to its present value. From this standpoint I suggest a fourfold classification.

(1) In some respects the Lord's ethical teaching is so determined or conditioned by the transient circumstances of His place or period that, as the years have passed, its value has been impaired or diminished, and it is, to speak frankly, so far out-of-date.

(2) In other respects the Lord's teaching retains its validity, but it is enlarged, modified, or restricted, by other principles or convictions which receive general assent.

(3) In some respects this teaching has no longer a distinctively Christian character. It has passed into the common moral tradition of our western civilisation, and we accept it without any general recognition that we owe it to the Lord.

(4) In other respects the recorded teaching of Jesus is so fundamental and of such abiding validity that it supplies, were we but ready to live in its spirit, the very principles which, even in our complex modern life, are the essential conditions, if actual human society is ever to be brought nearer to the ideal of the Kingdom or City of God.

I do not, of course, profess to deal with the subject exhaustively. I attempt only to give instances or samples of different elements in the Lord's teaching, when classified on this single basis of its present value. If anyone objects that such lines of distinction as I have suggested cannot be sharply drawn, and that one element runs into another, I at once allow the objection. Distinctions, which are by no means absolute, may sometimes suggest points of view.

II.

The point on which the modern world departs most deliberately and most certainly from the teaching of Jesus is in regard to the value of this present world. For what it is, for its past achievements and its future possibilities, we set a high value on the world that now is. The other world, far less sure, far less clear for us than for the Lord, we leave largely out of the reckoning till we reach it, sure that he who serves his day and generation here will not be penalized for this want of "other-worldliness" when he passes to another place. Now, without attempting to decide the question of the exact degree to which the ethics of Jesus were world-affirming or world-renouncing—both attitudes are clearly discoverable in the Gospels—it may certainly be said that the future and imminent Kingdom of God was for Jesus the thing of real value. Therefore "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." Therefore, pay the half shekel into the Temple treasury, "lest we should offend

them," as a matter indifferent, just as the imperial tribute to Caesar was. Therefore to marry a wife, to buy a farm, to purchase a yoke of oxen, ought not to be taken as matters of serious and immediate interest. They were negligible, compared with the invitation to the spiritual banquet. "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded," is said almost in a tone of reproach, and even if the words were not actually those of Jesus, they are consonant with many other sayings that were. The present order is so soon to be reversed, the poor to be rich, the last to be first, the meek to be inheritors, the persecuted to be rewarded, that, quite naturally, the qualities that have value in the present order stand in slight esteem. For strong, dominating personalities there seems little place in the moral scheme. The virtues that make the good citizen are not commended on grounds of citizenship. The rulers that exercise authority and are called—in some cases deserve to be called—benefactors, are only mentioned to point the contrast with a different ideal. The respectable, conventional virtues, which do so much to cement the fabric of society and even to maintain its moral standards, were not wholly lacking in the Pharisees and were certainly to be found in the elder son of the parable. But they are of little worth in the estimate of Jesus. In the columns to which the serious and high principled man of our own day turns with most interest in his morning newspaper, the Lord, had a daily press existed, would probably have found little to arrest attention. Allowance, I know, has to be made on several points. We cannot—here at any rate Schweitzer is right—detach Jesus as a historic figure from His own time. A whole range of interests—political, social, artistic, economic,—which mean much to us, were non-existent in Galilee, and we can feel no surprise that they do not find expression in the Sermon on the Mount. Also, quite evidently, there are some texts and passages, which may be cited as evidence on the other side. But taking the matter on the whole, if we place the ethical teaching of the Lord side by side with the aims and interests

most operative in the best men of our own day, there is our greatest difficulty, there is our most pronounced departure, there, most evidently, was His teaching of His own time, and therefore, so far, not of ours. The stress of interest has shifted. With Jesus it lay in the new expected order, with us it is here.

And in this, of course, we have come near to the heart of the live and contested issue—eschatology, apocalyptic, interim-ethics, and the rest. On this point I have only one thing to say. In the Gospels, even in those portions of them which with most critical reason must be regarded as expressing the original thought or words of the Lord, two conceptions of the Kingdom of God may, I believe, be recognised. The one is eschatological, the other is spiritual. It is a commonplace, I fancy, among students to admit that both are there. According to the eschatological conception the Kingdom is future, catastrophic, reversing the present world order, arriving suddenly, like a thief in the night, God-sent, not man-made or man-developed, involving for this present world the corresponding virtues of patience, expectancy, the surrender of every hampering care and interest. "If thy right hand offend thee cut it off." But according to the spiritual conception the Kingdom is inward, gradual, normal; it is like leaven, its qualities are the meek spirit and the pure heart, and there is place in it for Matthew Arnold's sweet reasonableness. Consequently such virtues as fidelity, diligence, prudence, service, stand prominent. They have permanent, not interim, value. I do not know that, with our present knowledge of the subject, you can tear either of these conceptions of the Kingdom out of the recorded teaching of Christ. Schweitzer on the one hand, modern liberals on the other, seem to arrive at their unifications by ignoring the elements that will not fit in. My own difficulty, admitting that the two are there, is to conceive it possible that at the same time the Lord thought of the Kingdom both as eschatological, coming by intervention from above, and as spiritual, working gradually from within. The two may not be incompatible. Harnack and Dr. Rashdall tell us they may

be reconciled. Johannes Weiss regards them as exclusive alternatives; Jesus thought of the Kingdom either in the one way or the other, not in both. Theoretically, this insistence on the alternative has great force. Against it, we have to set the fact of the records. In any case, our altered point of view as regards the value of this present world seems to me to involve the main cleavage between the Lord's teaching and our own standards of value.

III.

Passing to another class of moral qualities, we may recognise certain principles in the ethical teaching of Jesus which we in the main accept and value, but in regard to which there is still more to be said. Let me take examples.

Humility is a Christian virtue. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. It is wise to begin in the lowest room. The Greek standard was that of the mean; to act in accordance with this was complete virtue. Christ has no standard for us, only an ideal. Not seven times, but seventy times seven. It is like the distinction between the architecture of the Greek temple with its limited, definite beauty and proportions, and the sweep of the Gothic arch, which passes beyond our sight, but does not end. Now from the recognition of the ideal we must always come away in humble mood; at best we are unprofitable servants. Yet, little as we love the conceited man, humility would be only dangerous, if it ever robbed the world of the assertive qualities of leadership, courage, enterprise, self-confidence, ambition, too, in its noblest forms, and even the power to fight for one's own way, if it is right. How far the Lord's own character corrects any onesidedness in His teaching here, has been pointed out in a well-known chapter in *Ecce Homo*. Perhaps, after all, the meekness of the Christian nature need not be wholly incompatible with the character of Aristotle's μεγαλόψυχος, "who deems himself worthy of great things and is worthy of them."

So it is with Self-sacrifice. "Let a man deny himself and take up his cross." Yes, if only so he can follow the Master

along the royal road towards the Kingdom. But not otherwise. No surrender, perhaps not even the surrender of actual sin, is of moral value, unless it can be shown to result in a greater positive good. Entire self-sacrifice would be spiritual suicide. For every negation a clearer and stronger assertion must be made. Christian people in the modern world are only too ready to find their religious life in the things they do not do. There is a certain strain in the New Testament to which they can appeal in justification, but before all things it is positive, active goodness that will redeem the world. The denial is not an actual virtue, at best it is a necessary condition.

What do we mean by Forgiveness? It is very prominent in the New Testament, but we are nowhere clearly told what it does and what it does not involve. A man, when wronged, may suppress all desire for the wild justice of revenge, but in most cases he would be right in recovering stolen property in the interests of justice, for the good of the thief, and because, so acting, he would be doing to others as he would they should do to him. Only rarely is it wise to "let off" an offender; are we even wise in wishing that God should let us off such wholesome correction as may be in store for us elsewhere? Nor, when human relationships are intimate, as in friendship or in marriage, is it ever possible to treat a breach of the written or unwritten covenant as though it had never been. Forgiveness does not involve a forgetting, however sincerely we may wish it did. Internationally, we are not likely to forget in this generation, or even in this century, the causes and the character of the present war, or the methods of the enemy.

When there is true harmony of character and ideals, whether as between God and man, or man and man, or nation and nation, then, automatically, past contrarieties pass out of the account; but, apart from this, there is no true reconciliation, and remission is hardly worth having. And all this, if true, makes Forgiveness a far less simple matter than it seems to be in the New Testament.

Consider again the beautiful ideal implied in "Be not anxious about the morrow." Harnack singles out care as one of the three enemies of the soul which Jesus calls us to annihilate. So are we to attain to the peace of God, to the Christian equivalent of the tranquility of the schools. And over against it, in marked contrast, rises such a character as that of the younger Pitt, who died of old age in his forty-seventh year, whose countenance never lost the look which came into it when he heard the news of Austerlitz, and whose like we have so sorely needed in this similar or sterner crisis in our history, which now, after one hundred years, is come upon us. "Be not anxious about to-morrow;" the admonition has its beauty and value; but so, too, has the example of the man who falls in a great cause, worn out by the cares and anxieties involved. And many of us, not questioning, perhaps, that Mary chose the better part, are inclined to put in a plea for the way of Martha.

And so might we go on to recognise how the individualistic teaching of Jesus needs the complement of social ethics; how, along with the care of the sick should go the protection and training of the whole; how, recognising the law of love, we may yet also recognise that competition has economic and even moral value. In such ways does the Lord's teaching hold good, even in our modern world, and yet, in each instance, leave us with the sense that something more is to be said.

IV.

As we move away from details and particulars, and approach the wider principles, the modern world accords welcome and acceptance with less need for qualification. Indeed, in some respects, the teaching of Jesus has passed so fully into the common moral heritage that we no longer concern ourselves about its origin.

No one has taught more clearly than Jesus that it is the inward things that have real value. It does not profit to gain the world and lose the soul. The inward integrity, the inward

purpose, the inward light, the inward love of the highest are what really matter. The Lord might have subscribed to the dictum that nothing can "be regarded as good without limitation except the good will." Out of the heart are the issues of life. Stoicism and Buddhism have recognised the same principle. No person of competent moral judgment would, to-day, dispute it. Even though conduct be three parts of life and trees are known by their fruits, it is the motive that determines moral value.

No one has taught more clearly than Jesus the duty and the excellence of compassion. And, in spite of the protest of the sociologist that prevention is better than cure, compassion and charity have passed into the common soul of humanity, so fully that we have sometimes to remind ourselves that even benevolence ought to be regulated by the reason. In theory, and even in practice, we are all willing to bear our share of the world's burden of suffering and loss.

It is a kindred element in the teaching of Jesus that asserts the value of man as man, and applies the same standard of moral measurement to the lives of all the children of man. How far this universalism of Jesus was developed in His own teaching is not clear, but it is there in germ, as His attitude towards the Samaritan or the Centurion, and His vision of the many who shall enter the Kingdom from the east and from the west, suffice to prove. The Pauline thought, that in Christ is neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free, goes beyond the Lord's words in its explicitness, and contradicts some other well-known sayings. But it is in line with much that Jesus did say, and the world at large has accepted the principle in theory, however lamentably, in practice, it may have failed to realise it, or found it impossible of realisation, as, for example, in regard to the negro question in the United States.

So are we all agreed that moral qualities outweigh all ritual observances or ceremonial correctness, that justice, mercy, and faith count for more than legalistic punctuality, that grown

men and women may learn lessons from the child set in their midst, and that certain moral claims are higher in character and more binding than the closest ties of kinship. Most men take their standards of conduct from their surroundings, and do not, consciously at any rate, refer them to the New Testament. Yet much might be written as to the extent to which the best human society of our day does recognise standards, which, however, subsequently filled out in detail, were recognised and avowed, though usually not originated, in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

V.

Finally, we come to those great commonplaces of Christianity, which are all the more truly Christian because they are not exclusively so, the possession of which would carry us far, indeed, along the road that leads so very slowly towards the Kingdom. I name three—Service, Stewardship, Brotherhood.

"I am among you as he that serveth." "Not to be ministered unto but to minister." However eschatological in its colours and setting is the description of the Judgment Day in St. Matt. xxv., at any rate the ground of the verdict is absolutely ethical, not even interim-ethical, for the question of time does not enter in. Sheep and goats, they take their place right or left of the throne, on this single test that they had ministered or had not ministered to the needs of their fellows. The range of this service is narrowly conceived, but its principle is wide and abiding. All the Greeks taught us about citizenship, all the trite maxims of patriotism—more potent to-day, Loisy tells us, than religion—such as *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, all the devotion of the slum worker, or the scientist, or the pioneer of commerce, to their especial tasks, may be gathered into one co-operative synthesis of ministry, under this single principle of service. If, in our modern world, we all knew and believed that the test of life is not what we gain but what we give, we should at once have reverted to a fundamental principle of Jesus, and have also made notable progress towards the Kingdom.

So with Stewardship, which is really involved in Service. The term "Trust" in our modern business world has associations which do not entirely commend it, but in a higher sense all life is a trust, and none felt or taught this more clearly than the Lord. Take the parable of the Talents. Again the setting is eschatological; again the principle is spiritual and abiding. The torrent of His denunciation against Scribes and Pharisees is due to their betrayal of a trust. Jesus found no fault with the amount of large incomes, or with class privilege as such, or with the wide powers entrusted to persons in authority; the thing that mattered was the use made of these entrusted talents, the recognition of moral liability for all that a man calls his own. There is no divine right of private property, but it is probably the best working arrangement that we can devise. But property is undoubtedly a trust. So Jesus thought. So does the modern social reformer. Trade unions in their use of power, the capitalist in the making and employment of his millions, are only but are always justified when this principle is recognised. In this point religion and morality blend, and are at one. Modern luxury, all the phases of the selfish life, all narrow incivism, all abuse of power or authority, all pride of place or class, are only possible when the fact that morally we are not owners but stewards is ignored.

Vitaque mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu.

Finally, there is Brotherhood, or Love, or Altruism, or the enthusiasm of Humanity, or the same thing by any other term. With Jesus this was probably limited by the Kingdom. It does not extend to those who are shut out in the darkness, though it does extend to those who are going astray and lost.

The Johannine Love, so intense, so tender, yet so clearly and sharply restricted, only accentuates a limitation of range already admitted in his Master's teaching. As so often, we must extend or develop what Jesus gave. To bring this spirit or attitude out of the little coteries of religious persons into the market place, and the directors' board room, and the factory,

and the political arena, is an unachieved desideratum of modern human society. The great war has forced upon us a measure of national unity. We might have had the same sense of brotherhood and comradeship through the Lord's teaching, had we been able to learn and listen. Some of our pessimistic prophets foresee a dreary vista of industrial conflict awaiting us in the years that lie beyond the treaty of peace that may be one day signed. To avert this, by some scheme of profit sharing or any other economic mode of recognising the essential partnership of capital and labour, would be a fundamentally Christian enterprise. Jesus was no social reformer, still less was He a socialist, in spite of the dictum that there is enough dynamite in the New Testament to blow up all existing institutions. But He gave us principles which still hold good in the midst of our complex modern life, and human society, as well as the individual member of it, might find the remedy for many maladies in some of the principles that were fundamental in His view of life.

To sum up in a few words. Human society must look for guidance not to the text of the New Testament, but to the direction of that unseen power which we call, in Religion, the Spirit of God. Yet of this Spirit was it said that He should bring to our remembrance the things that the historic Christ said unto us. And in some of our strongest and most independent moral convictions we find that we are in reality re-thinking the thoughts of the Son of Man.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

By Rev. Alfred Fawkes, M.A., Ashby St. Ledgers.

1. It was a saying of Father Tyrrell that Ethics required criticism as urgently as dogma. And the situation has developed rapidly; we are faced by the movement which he foresaw. But while the criticism of dogma has passed out of the province of discussion, that of Ethics is still in the making. It has to be thought out and to justify itself; to find its proper method and forms. Some of us are unwilling to admit its inevitableness. For, while there is a general agreement that dogma is a product of human thought, and variable, the rules of conduct, it is held, are of Divine appointment, and unchanging. So that, while the notion of an infallible authority in matters of faith has been tacitly abandoned, in morality it has been retained. But I am inclined to think that the impression of unreality which, we are told, religion leaves on the average man is due even more, or at least more directly, to its ethical than to its theological atmosphere. For the average man is not sufficiently interested in theology to go into it very deeply. His apprehension of it is superficial; but, unless theologians are exceptionally tactless and ride roughshod over him, he is inclined to take it for granted. The average Catholic, *e.g.*, does not trouble himself much over the Pope, or the average Anglican over bishops. Whereas ethics touches him on many sides; and is, in a sense, his affair. And what may be called "Consumptive" Christianity does put off robust people. I do not know that Christians in real life are more consumptive than their neighbours, but the Sunday school novelette of our childhood revelled in phthisis; and its traditions die hard.

2. The ethical difficulties presented by the Old Testament are so great that the most important school of early Christian theologians, the Gnostics, cut the knot by throwing over the Old Testament God and Old Testament religion. It was a heroic remedy; and it cannot be applied by the modern theologian to the New, sensible as he may be of its difficulties. But that he is in trouble over them is beyond dispute. He is perplexed by the wide gaps in its ethics; by their large and inseparable admixture of time-and-place stuff; and by the radical difference between its outlook and our own. For, certainly, if we regard the New Testament as a manual of ethics, it is defective. "Whoever expects to find in Scripture a specific direction for every moral doubt that arises, looks for more than he will meet with," says Paley[1]; and Jowett writes—perhaps with a touch of irony—in what I must call one of the great books of English Divinity—"No one can read the ninth chapter of the First, or the eleventh and twelth chapters of the Second, Epistle to the Corinthians, without feeling how different the Apostle St. Paul must have been from good men among ourselves."[2] He speaks much and often of himself; he "glories not a little;" he "magnifies his office;" he does not scruple to press personal claims. His view of women is Oriental; he takes slavery as a matter of course; the Stoics were more humanitarian than he. The New Testament has no theory of the intellectual virtues, of the duty of self-realization, of the active moral excellencies—those of the statesman, the official, the soldier, the man of affairs. And both the Church and the world have suffered from this: the Church would have been more human, the world less godless, if the ethics of the New Testament had been more complete. Even the parables pass over the social and economic conditions of the time lightly. For one like that of the rich man and Lazarus—and even here the motive is rather religious than ethical—how many seem to take for granted the cruelties,

[1] Moral and Political Philosophy, ch. iv.
[2] Essay on the Character of St. Paul.

which then, as now, stained Eastern life so deeply! in how many, *e.g.*, that of the unrighteous judge, the unjust steward, the guests at the banquet, and the friend at midnight—the ethical conceptions are low! The answer of popular apologetic is unconvincing: it touches rather the form than the substance of the objection which it professes to meet. And more harm than good is done when religion is defended by a special pleading which gives, however unconsciously, the impression of insincerity. The horizons of the Word made flesh—let us not scruple to admit it—were not extended beyond those of His human environment. "Never man spake like this man;" yet His teaching, Divine as it is, is set in the framework of His place and time.

3. History confirms what Scripture indicates. For surely it is an evasion to say, as we sometimes hear it said, that Christianity has not failed, because it has never been tried. If this is so, after nearly 2,000 years, it is unlikely that it ever will be tried; in which case it is a *flatus vocis*: the argument deals with words, not with things. It is unreasonable, indeed, to quote the crimes of notoriously bad Christians against Christianity. In every institution and in every age there are those, and those in high places, whose lives bring discredit on their profession. But an Alexander VI. is an unsatisfactory argument against the Papacy, and a Commodus against the Empire; they were wicked men, who acted wickedly—after their sort. But with the general level of society, and still more with the bad actions of the good, it is otherwise; here the proportion between the tree and its fruit becomes a problem. That the author of Utopia should have been a persecutor; that canonized saints, like Charles Borromeo and Pius V., should have connived at assassination; that Urban VI., the *Babbo Mio Dolce* of St. Catherine of Siena, should have calmly recited his breviary in the garden within hearing of the groans of the cardinals who were being racked by his orders—such things strike us, to say the least of it, as incongruous; we do not expect good men to behave in this way. All through

the so-called ages af faith there is a really hideous background; the curtain which separates kings and Popes and saints from the dungeon, the torture chamber and the scaffold is thin. And these savageries excited no repulsion. Pious monks prepared the victims for the slaughter-house; men were broken or torn or roasted with the Host in their mouths. But it never occurred to anyone that the whole thing was an abomination. Anatole France's noble chapters, *La Justice*,[1] are as true to psychology as to history; people went to these horrors as they go to a picture palace to-day. It is not impossible that posterity, looking back at it, will pass a not dissimilar judgment on the Christianity of our own age.

4. The same paradox is found in other subject matter. Louis XV. dismissed Mme. Du Barry from court before receiving the last sacraments. As soon as the most Christian King was out of danger, the lady returned, and the lights of the Gallican Church seem to have regarded both her dismissal and her recall as normal incidents. In Corsica, fifty years ago, Holy Week was a close time for the vendetta. Etiquette forbade you to shoot your enemy during the period covered by the Easter precept, when you were both of you, presumably, making your Easter confession and communion; but after Low Sunday, it was shooting as usual, and at sight. And in our own time to say that religion has shown itself powerless against wickedness is to say too little. An official writer, speaking of the Belgian blood-bath of 1914—and the same may be said of more recent barbarities—reminds us that it was "excused and approved by the religious leaders of Germany, Protestant and Catholic; by Cardinals like Hartmann, Court Chaplains like Dryander, and political Catholic champions like Erzberger." Dubois and the Abbés of the Regency were less guilty; the massacres of the Counter-Reformation were less atrocious. The moral is: Do not take either the preacher or the priest for granted. Ask: Does the preaching of the one, does the priesthood of the other make for goodness? If not, not all the

[1] *Les Opinions de M. Jérôme Coignard*, pp. 240-288.

official sanctities of Christendom will save it; "it is good neither for the land nor for the dunghill; men cast it out."

5. The test is a searching one—no Church comes out of it unscathed. We criticize the silent infallibility of the Vatican—silent when speech is so clearly called for. *Quam temere in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam!* We may remember that in the critical period of our own history—of which we have been reading in Mrs. Green's epilogue to the *Short History of the English People*[1]—the period between Waterloo and the Crimean War (it might be invidious to extend it)—it would be difficult to find a single abuse which the bishops did not defend from their place in Parliament, or a single reform which they did not oppose. Lord Shaftesbury tells us, of the Factory Acts, that, while they were supported by unbelievers, professors of religion fought them clause by clause. So much the worse for professors of religion. Yes; but (what is much more important) so much the worse also for the religion which they professed and discredited. It is a regrettable fact that the highest ethical standards are not found in the Churches or among religious people, and that religious people see nothing disconcerting in this. In *Mademoiselle Ixe*, when Mrs. Merrington defends the heroine from the charge of being without religious principle by urging that "she seems in every way such an excellent person; so kind to the children, so obliging and unselfish," the answer of the clergyman's wife is, "But, my dear Mrs. Merrington, what on earth has all that got to do with religion?"

6. Endless, however, as these varieties are, they exhibit a law. The present war is a case of throwback, or reversion to type; under normal circumstances morality, like intelligence and civilization, advances, though it does so tentatively, and less rapidly and surely than we could wish. Cruelty and the grosser forms of vice are, and are increasingly, repudiated by public opinion; drunkenness is thought discreditable, and social or inter-class morality is the distinctive growth of the new age.

[1] Edition 1916.

A generation ago there were, no doubt, people who interested themselves in social and philanthropic work, but they were thought eccentric. Now it would be exceptional not to do so; or, at least, not to wish to be thought to do so. A community conscience is developing. No employer of labour would now venture to say that the conditions under which his men lived did not concern him; no landowner would, like Lord Palmerston, denounce tenant right as landlord wrong.

7. So that what we find in ethics is just what we find in every department of human activity, religion included; not a fixed quantity of unchanging truth, a deposit once given, and to be kept inviolate. No, but a process, a direction or movement, a running stream of aspiration, effort, and achievement —a thing ever becoming, and never become. Development is its law of life. And this may be a logical, or a real development. The former is the explication of the content of a notion. Nothing new is added; it is like the opening of a closed hand. The best examples are found in formal subject matter, *e.g.*, in the technical formulation of the doctrine of the Incarnation during the period of the Great Councils. Here, a theologian would argue, there was no change in the notion; men apprehended it more clearly, that was all. Real development, however—and when the term is used scientifically it is real development that is intended—supposes a change in the notion. The notion does not stand, a world of objective truth, motionless while the stream of life passes. No: bank and stream are alike in motion, all things flow. The unity of the process is a unity of origin and direction, not of content; the waters are many, but they have one source, and one goal. An example of this real development is found in what has been called the higher righteousness of the Gospel. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time: But I say unto you." Or in such a growth as that of international law, or arbitration, or socialism; or in such a transition as that to the World-Church from the little brotherhood, "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," or to the conception of society which took

shape in the Holy Roman Empire from that which was held in the Ghettos of Alexandria and Antioch. Some of these developments are legitimate, some illegitimate; some temporary, some lasting; some superficial, some part and parcel of a larger life-movement, such as the abolition of slavery, the growth of humanitarianism, or feminism. Their germs are found in the New Testament, but in a rudimentary state, their emergence from which is conditioned by a general replacement of lower by higher ideas.

8. It is obvious that the Eleatic unity postulated by Catholicism, and by the more traditional forms of Protestantism, has no room for such developments. Hence the distrust of progress common to these Churches. Human nature being what it is, they cannot exclude it. But they admit it reluctantly, under protest, in as small doses as possible, and in hope of better days when the concessions, extracted under pressure of necessity, may be withdrawn. The attitude of Convocation to criticism does not materially differ from that of Concordats to civilization. "Priests of all religions are the same," says Dryden. But we may console ourselves; *Mox illos sua fata manent majore sub hoste.* Nor can it be denied that the Heraclitean flux calls, not indeed for Convocation or Concordats, but for a certain rational and ideal balance. "We may compare Parmenides and Heraclitus," says a modern philosopher, "to two lofty and precipitous peaks on either side of an Alpine pass. Each commands a wide prospect, interrupted only on the side of its opposite neighbour. And the fertilizing stream of European thought originates with neither of them singly, but has its source midway between."[1] The Parmenidean interpretation, indeed, whether of religion or of ethics, refutes itself. It breaks down under an interior contradiction; the documents on which it relies are conflicting, and do not give the required sense. Again, it pre-supposes a static world, while what we find is a world in movement. It is impossible, *e.g.*, to take an isolated saying of our Lord,

[1] The Greek Philosophers. A. W. Benn. 25.

whether on marriage, or oaths, or poverty, or non-resistance, to remove it from the living stream of his thought, to petrify it, and make it the corner-stone of a dogmatic construction. Such an exegesis is fantastic; it misunderstands and misinterprets the text. Thus theologians defended persecution, the Divine right of kings, slavery, the belief in witchcraft. The letter lent itself to these superstitions; the spirit broke away from them; and the growing consciousness of mankind passed them by. An example lies under our eyes. An acrimonious controversy is going on in the religious journals as to the part to be played by women in the National Mission. I am not rash enough to express an opinion as to whether they should or should not take part in it; or (if they should) as to what their part should be. But I think it should be said plainly that, "Let your women keep silence in the Churches" has nothing to do with it; the question, if there is one, must be argued on other grounds. The same must be said of the Canons of the Fourth Council of Carthage, and of the so-called Apostolical Constitutions. Neither the Church of England nor rational religion is concerned with these things.

9. No less important is the consideration that God speaks to us πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτροπῶς. To forget this is to separate the natural from the supernatural too sharply; to draw too hard-and-fast a line between the human and the Divine. Such hard-and-fast lines exist for thought, not in things. Things shade off into one another. They are neither wholly this, nor wholly that—it depends upon the point of view from which we look at them; but both, or neither, or something between the two. "Here also there are gods" was the answer of Heraclitus to those who shrank back from the smoke and flame of his workshop. God is present, operative, and eloquent, not only in religious life, but in secular; not only in the Church, but in the world. Yet this is far from involving the perfection of either. Both are mixed magnitudes. The unbeliever, looking at the world of to-day, will not question the grave judgment of Scripture that it is "lying in wickedness;" the Christian, faced

by the failure of the Churches to make Christianity actual, will admit that "the Church of the firstborn, without spot or wrinkle," is in heaven, not here. The institutions, civil and religious, under which we find ourselves—Monarchy, Parliamentary Government, Episcopacy, the Papacy, Presbytery—the floating mass of feeling and opinion which we breathe and by which we are surrounded, all that makes up the atmosphere and environment of life; these things are of God in so far as He ordains or permits them; nay more, in so far as His Spirit moves, as it does, over their surface, guiding, developing, perfecting, bringing reason out of their unreason, order out of their confusion, right out of their wrong. But from another and equally valid point of view they may be regarded as the matter, stubborn and unyielding, upon which form works; the chaos out of which it evolves the moral universe. Of this unfinished creation religion and morality are part. Both are incomplete and in the making. There is goodness in the world, but imperfect goodness; reason, but inchoate reason; law, but law imperfectly conceived, formulated and enforced. And the process will not be hurried; we must wait.

10. Particular and limiting epithets should be applied to universal subject matter sparingly. In a historical sense we may speak of Christian Ethics with propriety. What is meant is the development of Ethics in Christian Europe. But to speak of Christian Ethics in the sense of a distinct kind or species of Ethics, standing over against other kinds or species, seems a misnomer. The science of conduct is rational rather than either Christian or non-Christian, and it is one. I do not feel able to draw the distinction between Christian and rational as strongly as it is often drawn. There is, no doubt, a difference of emphasis and accent, to miss which is to land oneself in a rather arid intellectualism. But, in substance, Christianity is a re-publication, re-statement, and re-inforcement of the dictates of reason. Hence its power of development; it grows as reason grows. And any interpretation of Christianity, however plausible it may appear, which is in conflict with reason, or

with those institutions in which reason embodies itself—Law, the State, Society—is self-refuted. Take *e.g.*, non-resistance. A community which acted consistently on this principle could not subsist. At home, without law and the reserve of force upon which law rests, it would be the prey of the criminal classes: abroad, without power to expand, unarmed, and precluded by its principles from self defence, it would invite the attacks of its less scrupulous neighbours; and thus, the victim at once of domestic anarchy and foreign aggression, inevitably disappear. What is this but to dissolve society, and to make civilized life impossible? To suppose that God intended this is to suppose that He intended the destruction of the good, and the triumph of the evil elements in the world. Common sense revolts; the instinct of self preservation is of divine implanting; as long as bad men conspire, good men must combine.

So, too, in the Church. Controversy and party are evils. But there are worse evils; and, as long as foolish men talk nonsense, wise men must shew that it is nonsense; otherwise the community will be given over, bound hand and foot, to folly; and so, in the end, to a reprobate mind.

So that when people say—"What! you are a Christian? How is it that you are not a Pacifist, or a Conscientious Objector, or a member of the League of this, that, or the other?" I shall not argue the matter on the ground of religion—such discussion would be at once endless and unprofitable—but on that of reason. It is enough to say that these things are unreasonable, *i.e.*, intellectually foolish; and therefore—I would lay stress on the word "therefore"—morally wrong. This being so, I am quite sure that they are not Christian. For "God is not the author of confuson," whether of thought or things; and we may remember the great text of the Cambridge Platonists—"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." The Ethics of the New Testament are part of a larger whole. To take them apart from this wider content, and label them Catholic, or Church, or even Christian, is to

narrow them, to encourage cranks, and to suggest what I ventured to call "Consumptive" Christianity—*i.e.*, a degenerate variety of Christianity with a doubtful past and no future, which is "contrary to all men," and, if we believe, with the poet, that— "Still the Lord is Lord of might,"
displeasing to God.

> "Those He approves that ply the trade,
> That rock the child, that wed the maid;
> That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
> Sow gladness on the peopled lands,
> And still with laughter, song, and shout,
> Spin the great wheel of earth about."[1]

11. It was the saying of a wise man that, to the reflection how much the Church had influenced the world, the answer was—"Yes; but how much more the world has influenced the Church!" It is probable, I had almost said it is certain, that the development of Ethics will come in the future, as it has come in the past, not from the distinctively religious, but from what we loosely call the secular side of life. Ethics advance with civilization rather than with piety, because it is in civilization that reason has the larger field and the freer play. The reason why the religious world opposes reform, is not because it is religious, but because it is stupid; the reason why Mill was a greater moral force than the bishops, who were his contemporaries, was not that he was a rationalist, but that he was a man of greater ability and force of character than they.

And it may be imprudent to rely on those schools of philosophy which look, or appear to look, most in the direction of the rehabilitation of religion. Such appearances are often deceptive: *nimium ne crede colori.* Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy* has a firmer grasp of reality than many a treatise of greater pretension to piety; his criticism of the moral sense, in particular, is in the spirit of the best tradition of English thought. The moral instincts, he says, exhibit no uniformity; they "bend to circumstances," and can be accounted for in other and more obvious ways than intuition; association and experience lie nearer to hand. "On the whole" (he

[1] *Our Lady of the Snows.* R. L. Stevenson.

concludes) "it appears to me either that there are no such instincts, or that they are not to be distinguished from prejudice and habits—on which account they cannot be depended upon in moral reasoning." And "the laws of custom are very apt to be mistaken for the order of nature. For which reason I suspect that a system of morality built upon instincts, will only find out reasons and excuses for opinions and practices already established—will seldom correct or reform either."[1]

The same doubt suggests itself in connection with certain by-paths of thinking, which may be described as reasons for believing without evidence, *i.e.*, for irrational belief. Tulloch's criticism of the *Grammar of Assent*,[2] is that it is "rather an ingenious elaboration of the fact that men hold certain beliefs" than a justification either of these beliefs or of their acceptance. "Sceptical of a philosophy of enquiry the author (he says) has boldly adventured a philosophy of credulity; for assent divorced from reason can be nothing but credulity; and Dr. Newman's assent is nothing else."

Matière et Mémoire is a very much more scientific work than the *Grammar of Assent*. But, unless the signs deceive us, the philosophical outlook of the eighteenth century is coming back; and, reinforced by more exact knowledge, will carry the thought of the twentieth on with a sweep and swing from the passing and superficial re-action of the nineteenth to clearer and more serene skies. And the present vogue, and, even more, some of the present applications, of the Bergsonian philosophy, would have been incomprehensible to the eighteenth century mind.

[1] *Moral and Practical Philosophy*, ch. v.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1870.

CHRISTIAN ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT: HELPS AND HINDRANCES.

By the Rev. H. D. A. Major, B.D., Rector of Copgrove.

The Deputy Garat in the French National Assembly of 1789 declared that the State had the right to abolish Christianity in favour of a more moral religion. Even to-day in Christian lands there are a number of highly moral persons who believe the Christian religion to be detrimental to morality. This is the fault not of the highly moral persons, nor of the essential character of the Christian religion, for it is the most ethical of all religions, but of the Church policy, which has too often subordinated Christian morality to theological speculation and ecclesiastical order, and has obstructed its proper development and extension by subservience to ecclesiastical traditions and conventions and prejudices. Thus Christian morality, being deprived of freedom and of pre-eminence, has experienced a corresponding loss of intelligence, sympathy, and strength.

We are all agreed that love constitutes the proper motive for Christian conduct; love to God, the moral idea; and love to man, the child of God.[1]

We are also all agreed that Christ's ethical teaching consists of the enunciation of principles, and that he only formulated precepts as illustrating those principles; that his precepts, therefore, are not what Bishop Butler calls "positive precepts," *i.e.*, precepts for which we do not see the reasons, but "moral precepts," *i.e.*, precepts for which we do see the reasons. The principles, however, are not themselves capable of development: they are fundamental and they are final; no Christian moralist looks to see them transcended or replaced, any more than any astronomer conceives of the law of gravity being nullified by fresh physical discoveries. Christian ethical development, therefore, does not consist in passing beyond the principles of Christ, but in their extension to new needs, and in their

[1] Love to man is well defined by Dr. Rashdall as: "A state of the desires, emotions, and will, directed towards the good of one's fellows."—*Conscience and Christ*, p. 189.

application to changed conditions. Now it is some of the helps and hindrances to this ethical development which I propose treating very briefly in this paper.

1.—First Help: a Willingness to Receive and Apply New Knowledge.

One great help to ethical development is knowledge—knowledge in its widest sense—knowledge of the physical sciences; knowledge of the political and social sciences. Physiology, economics, sanitation, psychology, and half a hundred other sciences, all have their bearing upon ethics. Hence the student and teacher of Christian ethics must not only have an open mind towards new knowledge, but an ardent desire for it. For every advance in this direction helps directly or indirectly to indicate wherein the highest and widest and most enduring good of humanity can be found, and how best it may be realized. The true interests of Christian ethical development are therefore utterly opposed to obscurantism. Just because the Christian is a lover of God and of man he will be a sincere lover of truth—for all truth rightly used conduces to human welfare:—

> "New occasions teach new duties,
> Time makes ancient good uncouth,
> They must upward still and onward
> Who would keep abreast of truth."

2.—Second Help: Christian Practice.

It cannot be emphasized sufficiently that problems which do not yield to the reason when used speculatively do yield to the reason when treated practically. This seems illogical, but experience proves it true. "Truth," said Westcott, "comes through life not through logic." "Let both grow together until the harvest," said Christ. Truth is many-sided, and how to live rightly is a very intricate matter which can only be accomplished by those who, by trying to live rightly, call in a living experience to correct the speculations of the theorist. "The Christian religion," wrote Illingworth, "distinctly refuses to be proved first and practised afterwards, its practice and its proof go hand in hand." This insight which action

gives is closely connected with the discipline of the will. No man who is not trying to act rightly can have a clear vision of the right, for, as Bacon affirms: "The reason is not a dry light but suffers an infusion from the will and affections." Action which is the result of a deliberate resolution of the will both strengthens the will and clarifies the reason by liberating it from the blindness and weakness which befall it when enslaved by the passions. Only as we endeavour practically to apply Christian principles do we really learn how they ought to be applied, and in that process we see an increasing number of cases where Christian principles ought to be applied, and where new circumstances demand the modification of their traditional application. Therefore practical action must be conjoined with the speculative reason in order to procure fruitful ethical development. It was Mr. Pecksniff who said: "Let us be moral, let us contemplate existence." Cicero wrote: *Virtutis laus omnis in actione consistit.* "Moses," writes the author of *Ecce Homo*, "condemns the bad man who does harm; Christ, the moral man who does no good."

3.—Third Help: Humble Reliance on and Earnest Seeking of the Spirit of God.

Another factor in Christian ethical development is revealed to us by reflection on the character of the Christian religion. Christianity is the religion of the spirit. This means much more than the assertion that it is a religion which is concerned with principles not with regulations. It means first and foremost that the Christian Church is a spirit-bearing body (πνευματοφόρος); that its source is not in this world of sense and time; that it is in its origin supernatural or spiritual; that it claims to be in contact with the spiritual realm, and to draw its life and strength therefrom. Some, indeed many, may dispute or deny such claims—but that is not the point. The Church of Christ, through her long history, and in the person of her most vital members, has been constant in the claim that this is the source of her life and insight. She does not depend primarily or alone upon the exercise of the human reason for

a right judgment in moral matters, not even when human reason is conjoined with strenuous action. She depends primarily upon the inspiration of the Spirit of God. The sentence in which she set forth her first conciliar decision in moral questions begins with the words: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." This inflow of moral and spiritual illumination is to be sought by an attitude of humble dependence and of single-minded desire directed towards that great Spiritual Power which the Christian Church believes to be the source both of our reason and of our conscience. St. James writes:—

> "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who giveth liberally to all men and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

And the author of *I. John* dares to write to his readers:—

> "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know (οἶδατε) all things" (ii. 20, *var. lect.* "and ye all know the Truth.")

The claims to ecclesiastical infallibility are abhorrent; and in the light of history they appear in many cases to be fictitious; and claims to individual infallibility appear even more objectionable. But it ought to be clearly understood that the claim to inspiration is not the same as the claim to infallibility —though it may easily be confused with it. The claim to infallibility is mechanical and magical; the claim to inspiration is conditional and moral. The Divine Inspiration depends upon the absolute loyalty of the Church or of the individual Christian to the source of Inspiration. I know this claim to inspiration is offensive to the rationalist. It savours of the most terrible form of egoism in the individual, and it seems hardly less offensive when claimed by a society. To that great moralist, Bishop Butler, it seemed highly objectionable. His words addressed to John Wesley, whom he believed to claim it, show this:—

> "Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing—a very horrid thing." Wesley replied, "I pretend to no extraordinary revelations, or gifts of the Holy Ghost: none but what every Christian may receive and ought to expect and pray for."

Certainly it may be used to support the blindest fanaticism and the most immoral emotionalism as, for instance, amongst some of the German sectaries of the seventeenth century. It

may be used to oppose both reason and conscience, and become a terrible engine of ecclesiastical tyranny. It may very easily be simulated for interested reasons. Mr. Edmund Gosse, in *Father and Son*, gives a humorous example of this:—

> The son was invited to a children's party by the Brown family. His father had scruples as to his son going; in fact was sure his son ought not to go. He proposed, however, that he and his son should pray about it for Divine guidance. They prayed. "My father asked me," writes Edmund Gosse: "'Well, what is the answer which our Lord vouchsafes?' My answer came in the high piping accents of despair; 'The Lord says, I may go to the Browns.' My father gazed at me in speechless horror . . . . he was certain the Lord had said nothing of the kind."

The dangers of the claim to inspiration are great, but the most useful agents are oftentimes, like fire, the most dangerous. The claim is very ancient. The primitive Church claimed that its Founder had promised that the Spirit of his Father should instruct his disciples after his departure, and they were conscious on many occasions of receiving the fulfilment of this promise. Many Christians have the same conviction even to-day. The claim to inspiration cannot, therefore, be abandoned by modern Christians. Earnest prayer is a means of moral strength and insight. It does assist Christians to "a right judgment in all things" (*recta sapere*).

The legalist who relies for his standard of conduct solely upon traditional regulations literally interpreted is equally opposed to both the rationalist and to the inspirationist or intuitionist. In this triangular duel the legalist has too often prevailed because his opponents have urged their claims separately, and often in opposition to each other.

Now it is the divorce of the claim of the rational conscience from the claim of personal inspiration which is the real weakness. Where you have the claim to inspiration as the sole guide in morals, you may get the wildest fanaticism, and the the most immoral emotionalism. When you have the rational conscience neglecting prayer and disbelieving in inspiration you approach the arrogant and complacent temper, which produced the Deism of the eighteenth century, combined in not a few cases with a subtle and immoral casuistry. To reason about morals is dangerous without a definite resolution to act

morally, but it is equally perilous without a humble and earnest reliance upon Divine guidance and the sincere desire to receive and obey it. No doubt we ought to feel that God answers our prayer by working in some inscrutable way through our reason and our conscience, and not apart from them, still less in opposition to them. Prayer then in its widest and deepest sense combined with faith in Divine inspiration is a great factor—indeed an absolute necessity—in Christian ethical development.

Having called attention to three helps to the development of Christian ethics, I will now deal briefly with three hindrances.

1.—First Hindrance: The Dominantly Passivist Conception of Christian Character and Duty.

There were various reasons why this passivist conception should be dominant in the early ages of the Christian Church. It was a weak and persecuted body, with little political and social influence. It was natural, therefore, that the exhibition of love should be mainly of a passive kind shown particularly in patience under suffering and in the whole-hearted forgiveness of cruelty and injustice. The example of our Saviour and the figure of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah (chapter 53) profoundly influenced the early Christian in this direction. To-day, however, there is need for a very active and pugnacious form of love. "The Son of God," writes St. John, "was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," and that destruction to-day in political and social and industrial life cannot be accomplished merely by a form of passive love.

"There was an old man who said; How
Shall I deal with this terrible cow?
If I sit on this stile,
And continue to smile,
I shall soften the heart of the cow."

The evils of our age call more and more for a Christian love which is vigorous and ready to take the offensive in storming the citadels of the enemies of humanity, and, while ever ready to forgive personal wrongs, knows no truce with systems and principles and methods which are hostile to human well-being. Keep smiling by all means, but also keep fighting. Christian

love is poles apart from Buddhistic passivism. The writer of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* who penned the words, "our God is a consuming fire" had a conception of God, nearer the mind of Christ than that of either Pope or President to-day.

2.—Second Hindrance: The Belief in Inevitable Ethical Development.

Another hindrance to Christian ethical development, closely akin in its results to the hindrance just mentioned, is the popular belief in natural or inevitable ethical development. The sort of belief that the world is bound to get better just as the British Empire is bound to muddle through. This belief in inevitable ethical development is, of course, due in large measure to the popular scientists, such as Ernst Haeckel, and their less thoughtful followers, but it is a deadly doctrine. The easy-going optimists who, fortified by a belief in automatic progress, decline to exert themselves, are living in a fool's paradise. History shows that moral progress runs in a very irregular fashion up a very steep and rugged ascent, and that our moral pioneers have climbed this ascent with sweat and tears and blood. Doubly-deceived and thrice-accursed are they who hold that the world is going to get better without intense and unceasing effort on the part of human beings. Automatic moral progress like natural goodness may be very comfortable doctrines, but they are also very dangerous deceits. Charles Kingsley's view is the right one:—

> "Not a good man; not a bad man;
> Scarce a man at all, one fears;
> If the man be that within us,
> Which is born of fire and tears."

3.—Third Hindrance: a Utilitarian or Common-sense View of Christian Ethics.

Another hindrance to Christian ethical development is the utilitarian or common-sense view of Christian ethics.

It is natural that in the presence of utilitarian and common-sense persons we should strive to show how thoroughly reasonable and practical the precepts of Christ are. I do not wish for one moment to "vilify reason," but there is some danger and loss in this mode of defence. Christian ethics are

super-rational even as their source is supernatural. The common-sense view of Christian ethics expels the heroic and most characteristic elements from Christian endeavour. In a recent book on Christian ethics—a book which states in a masterly manner and with unflinching courage the case for the authority of reason and conscience in Christian ethics as against the legalist and ecclesiastical position—the learned author, to whom I and many others owe much, when dealing with the precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," writes: "Christ never taught that a man ought to love his neighbour better than himself."[1]

Our present Primate some seven years ago maintained the same interpretation of this passage in a sermon published in the *Homiletic Review*, and the publishers, with unconscious humour, placed on the cover of the magazine which contained the sermon, a portrait of the Primate with this inscription above his Grace's head: "Self-love justified."

Now whatever there is to be said logically for this interpretation, it is one which I cannot but feel is alien to the spirit and *ethos* of the Christian religion.

All the golden heroism of the noblest Christian endeavour seems to me to be turned into lead by such a humdrum interpretation. Christian ethics has, I think, been adversely affected in some directions by Greek ethics, and by mediaeval scholasticism. The spirit of Christian ethics knows nothing of the μηδὲν ἄγαν of the Greeks, or the *via media* of respectable Anglicanism, notwithstanding that mistranslated text: "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Moderation is not one of the Christian virtues. The Christian, in so far as he is true to the *spirit* of his religion, does not love moderately, no, he loves to the uttermost. He does not hate mildly, but with his whole nature. That sense of propriety which marks the Greek, and that love of order which marks the Roman, are not characteristically and essentially Christian in their spirit. As we approximate to them we are not necessarily drawing nearer

[1] Rashdall's *Conscience and Christ*, p. 139.

to the spirit of Christ. Well-meant efforts to explain Christ's driving the money-changers from the Temple by saying the scourge was merely symbolical fail, I think, in some measure to appreciate that burning anger which I believe to be essentially Christian in the presence of irreverence and sordid greed. Equally well-meant and equally futile are the attempts to tone down Christ's denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees. We have heard so much of Christian sympathy that we do not realise the virile character of Christian antipathy, and have in some measure lost the power to understand Christ's attitude towards religious arrogance, formalism, and hypocrisy. The mild effulgence of our Lord's face in the church window pane has dimmed, for the modern Christian, the vision of the wrath of the Lamb. We need especially to beware of cold, clever, calculating conclusions in the matter of Christian duty; mediaeval scholasticism and Jesuit Probabilism are the Dead Sea fruits which it offers to souls athirst for God and Duty.

A casuistical utilitarianism, if introduced into the treatment of Christian ethics, may prove as fatal as a literalistic legalism.

Emotion and sentiment, not sentimentality,[1] must play a large part in the development of Christian ethics. Emotion is needed to stimulate the reason and to rouse the conscience. There is little doubt that Anglican Rationalism in the eighteenth century, by its fear and contempt of enthusiasm, did lower the standard of Christian practice. This was raised again by the influence of the emotional Evangelical Movement.

The Tractarian Movement affected to despise sentiment. What it did despise was evangelical sentiment which had become conventional and insincere. The Tractarian Movement had, however, a sentiment of its own. It was found in the ideal of the church, and was of a nobler and more historic type than the sentiment it displaced. Even strongly rational moralists recognise the valuable part which emotion and sentiment play in ethical development. Bishop Butler doubts

[1] Sentimentality or "Sentimentalism means delighting in feeling for feeling's sake, irrespective of its effect upon our life."—Dr. Nevlle Figgis.

whether to speak of the moral consciousness "as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart," a sentence which Dr. Whewell reversed by reading "as a perception of the understanding, or as a sentiment of the heart."

Bishop Brent, of the Philippines, in his stimulating volume, *Adventure for God*, writes:—

> "The poetic side of our nature is the main link that binds humanity to the Unseen Universe, and to Him who presides over things visible and invisible."

Christian moral education needs to cultivate this poetic side. It is here that Christian Art may play such a large part in inspiring, refining, and ennobling Christian practice. Christian Art shows us actions, feelings, and types of character, not primarily as right or as useful, but as beautiful. The action, of which our Lord said, that wherever in the whole world his Gospel should be preached, it should be told as a memorial of its doer, was an action which is described by our Lord in the Gospels as καλὸν ἔργον, a *beautiful* deed. Its rightness was, as a matter of fact, doubted by that common-sense utilitarian, Judas Iscariot, who condemned it on the ground that the ointment ought to have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor, but Christ saw in the deed an intrinsic beauty which escaped the eye of legalists and rationalists. *Pectus facit theologum.* That saying: "The heart makes the theologian" is profoundly true, but the heart also makes the Christian moralist. Bunyan names the pilgrim's guide, not Mr. Greathead, but Mr. Greatheart. A finely balanced casuistry may decide, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," involves as its correlative, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour no more than thyself," but such an interpretation is not in harmony with the *spirit* of Christ himself. Whilst the Christian disciple listens to it there rings in his ears, like some great trumpet blast, those words of Christ which say to him,

> "Whosoever willeth to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's the same shall save it."

We may be far from rising to that spirit of heroic devotion which the ethical teaching of the Gospel sets before us, but at

least we do well to recognize that clear Christian note which calls men to duty where there is no counting of the cost, no weighing of meagre probabilities which are held by some to be the guide of life, no thought of self at all, but only of one's cause and one's leader. Certainly it is this spirit which has achieved all the great triumphs in Christian history, and like the odour of the ointment which filled the house, it has been the incense which has accompanied those splendid lives of Christian sacrifice and service in which self was forgotten and only Christ remembered.

A Practical Question.

This consideration leads to the important practical question: How can the ordinary Christian best develop a noble standard of Christian practice? We are all agreed that this cannot be done by commanding him to submit to a legal system of regulations; and I think that urging him to study the principles of moral philosophy and Christian casuistry, would prove equally unsatisfactory in most cases. The best thing for him to do is to keep before him the figure of His Master, and to study that, asking himself repeatedly in daily life: "How would Christ act in such a case?" In theory there are objections to this, but in practice they have but little force. Christian experience throughout the ages is summed up in Tennyson's familiar lines:

> "And so the Word had breath, and wrought
> With human hands the creed of creeds
> In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought;"

or, as Bishop Lightfoot wrote:

> "The ethical principle of the Gospel is conformity to a perfect exemplar, incorporation into a divine life."

It is this personal touch which is needed. It is persons rather than principles that inspire most men. It is the study of an ethical ideal embodied in a life which will best assist the ethical development of the average man, especially when it is believed that that life is a true reflection of the invisible, spiritual reality in Whom we live and move and have our being, and in Whom the more we live the more our life becomes life indeed.

SOME OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

By the Rev. Professor CALDECOTT, D.D., Litt.D., Dean of King's College, London.

In selecting objections relevant for consideration at this Conference, I am adopting two limiting lines. First, that Christian Ethics is taken as understood by Christians who read both the original Gospel and the whole compass of the Christian Faith in the light of literary criticism and historical study; outside this line there lie objections which we are not concerned to defend. And, secondly, that the objections we consider must be such as proceed from quarters which we respect for their own elevation of outlook; from those who agree with us in holding what may be described as the spiritual conception of the world. For them as for us, Psychology is no longer merely an analytical and descriptive study of a human nature without a soul; it is personalist, and traces the rise and growth of personality in mind; and their sociology, like ours, conceives of the social order as a combination of spiritual persons. We agree in assigning a large place to freedom in human activity; in setting a high value on individuality; upon the innerness of moral values; upon the conception of good as positive and progressive; upon the legitimacy of the feelings culminating in love. In short, we agree in "thinking nobly of the soul," and our conception of the social order corresponds with this high conception of the individual.

And yet between Christian Ethics and general Ethics there remain some differences, numerous and important. Of these I select some for discussion.

1. In the teaching and the practice of Christ and of the Christian Churches, the attention given to the weaknesses,

imperfections, and failures of human nature is greater than general Ethics suggest. We are therefore charged with causing a diversion of health, vigour, and positive forces generally, into unprofitable channels; there is loss of efficiency from the point of view of the health and vigour of the community as a whole; the marching-rate of the human race is lowered. Even after allowing for a beneficent reflex influence upon the strong characters themselves, there is loss, perhaps waste, when attention to the weak withdraws forces from more productive activity: *e.g.*, the Eugenists are faced with the difficulty of fitting their plans for the improvement of the race into a scheme which treats all human beings as of equal value, and insists on the very weakest and poorest being carried on the shoulders of the more favoured. From the point of view of idealist Ethics—progressive attainment of individual good in the good of the whole—we do not find the same estimate of the imperativeness of the duty of the strong carrying the weak with them in the upward march as that which, by common consent, marks the Christian Ethic.

2. In the attitude to Suffering. General Ethics and Christian Ethics agree that suffering, physical and mental, is a part of the lot of man upon earth. But general Ethics, as I read it, urges us to draw off attention from its acceptance and endurance to its avoidance and prevention. Christian Ethics, whilst also eager to prevent suffering, accepts an inevitableness in it more frankly; and braces the soul to endure it, and even to profit by it. All schemes approve of preventive hygiene as well as of healing medicine; all endeavour to prevent the occurrence of sufferings due to ignorance and vice by removal of their causes; but Christian Ethics seems to find an irreducible element of suffering in the present scheme of things for the entire abolition of which there is no prospect within the scheme; and then courageously to look for some beneficent purpose which endurance of suffering alone can provide for: a purifying and educative influence upon the growth of the soul itself.

3. Vicarious suffering: the voluntary taking over by one man of the suffering that is impending upon another. Speaking rationally only, the simplest maxim seems to be, that every soul should brace itself to endure the suffering that the course of the world brings upon it, or that it brings upon itself. *Prima facie*, however noble it may be for another to step forward and transfer this suffering to itself, it seems ignoble to acquiesce in the transfer. In proportion to our estimate of the importance of freedom and self-reliance, seems the urgency of our carrying our own burden. And even if we are sure that reason could justify the maxim, "Thy need is greater than mine," as a sufficient guide for the individual in relation to another individual, there would remain the question whether society can regard as conducive to social welfare the voluntary sacrifice of the profitable life on behalf of the unprofitable. Yet Christ's valuation is plainly that it is a primary duty of man to go beyond bearing the suffering that falls to himself, and readily, and even with joy as if a privilege, to take up all that he can of the burden of his neighbour.

4. The need for repentances and conversions. By these I mean the need for constant and repeated acts of repentance, and for conscious efforts to turn the current of our moral life. The Christian discipline includes the practice of frequent self-examination, leading to definite penitence and renewed resolutions of amendment. The necessity for these is objected to in favour of a simple confidence in continuous goodness and progress. There seems to be an advantage in giving our attention to the onflowing tide of the good desires and affections of our nature; frequent pauses for examination arrest the stream; left to itself it will submerge the obstructions. The modern man—we were told in a sentence which has been very efficacious in drawing attention to this momentous difference of view—is not "worrying over his sins;" and the rationalist finds great difficulty in hearing with patience of the repeated searchings of heart and profound self-condemnations recorded in the lives of Christian saints. He even seems to find that

an evil is produced by men's persistence in looking for one. And though, when pressed, he would be compelled to acknowledge that occasions for examination and repentance, and for turning round, from time to time arise even in the best men and women, he deprecates as excessive the regularizing of these into a discipline to be faithfully and even painfully observed. But who would recognise as Christian the Ethics from which a strong insistence upon discipline was removed?

5. Christian Ethics is charged with holding a combination of self-reliance and dependence (upon God), which amounts to a dualism. Outside Christian Ethics, ethical systems make their choice: Personalist Ethics centres upon the finite individual in the finite society; Absolutist Ethics centres upon the absolute. Each of these lays great store by its unity and consistency, and regards Christian Ethics as vitiated by a fundamental inconsistency and a consequent wavering in attitude, which is fatal to firmness and regularity in moral deliberations. Now the Christian might take the line of setting these opponents to deal with one another before he troubles himself about this objection; and the possibility of taking this course probably accounts for the objection not being widely felt among us. But, apart from this, we proceed on our way insisting upon working together the virtues of humility and self-reliance. We regard quietistic self-abnegation as a fault on one side, and Stoic pride as a fault on the other. The reconciliation justifies itself in the history of Christian morals, though for its explanation we undoubtedly need to go beyond the range of Ethics itself.

6. That in the realm of the affections there is no need to go beyond humanity. It is held that in the desires, emotions, and affections, man can attain full sufficiency and satisfaction within the sphere of humanity. The persons in immediate contact with us offer a large scope, and when we pass to wider circles of society, enlarging to one's nation, to kindred or allied nations, and onward to the whole human race, ample objects for that development of the emotional life of the soul

which is now acknowledged to be a vital part of the moral life, is offered to us. In short, the love of neighbour is the adequate field for human love. Not all rationalist Ethics take this view; the need of an expansion of affections which cannot be met by any extension of range which has conceivable limits, is expressed by such a position as that of Spinoza with his intellectual love of God. And it is no doubt chiefly from world-views which are essentially pluralist, that this objection springs. But it is not only they, but the many who think about moral questions apart from all metaphysical theories, who are insistently urging the sufficiency of finiteness in the life of feeling. Christian Ethics, however, not only, I think, deduces insufficiency from its theistic position, but reads the experience of human affections as giving a clear record that emotional satisfaction has not been attained by souls confined to finite limits in the past; while it finds that completeness of satisfaction is declared to have been attained by souls which have included the fundamental quality of infinity or absoluteness in their ideals.

Religious literature abounds with such assurances of complete joy and peace being attained at times, and even predominantly over the emotional life. And devoted as is the Christian to the love of neighbour, he cannot regard it as "the first and great commandment."

7. A difference as to the place assigned to aesthetic values, the place of the Beautiful as a quality of objects, and of the love of it among the affections of the soul.

The place of Beauty is less fundamental in Christian Ethics than in some idealist Ethics. In Christian Ethics "seek the true," "pursue the good," stand as imperatives incumbent upon every child of man. "Seek the beautiful" stands upon a lower plane. In the main, Ethics outside Christianity agrees with this, and therefore this particular objection is not widely felt.

But for myself I hold that it is the mark of a complete philosophy to raise Beauty to the level of the other great attributes of reality; that a philosophy is deficient in its

thought or its valuation if it fails to do this, and that it is by reason of this deficiency that not a few great intellects fall below the highest line of guides to humanity. So that for me an opposition stands between Christian Ethics and the best philosophical Ethics. For I find that in the Gospel the appeal to Beauty, stands subordinate to the appeals to Duty and to Truth, and further, that in the history of Christian piety and morals the same valuation runs on. Probably every soul has some sense of the charm and the splendour of the true and the good, and the achievements of Christian art stand forth to speak for themselves. But in many souls of deep piety and vigorous morality there seems to be small stress laid upon it, and many seem to be able to dispense with it altogether. I allow that its non-appearance may have been due to the stress and turmoil of life, and to pre-occupations with Duty of a hard and exacting kind. Still, it seems possible over wide areas of humanity to dispense with the love of Beauty. And Christian Ethics have in the main reflected this in its valuation of Beauty in comparison with Duty and Truth.

8. The retention by Christian Ethics of a spiritual society within the general social order: of a church or churches, in short; exemplified in the fact of this being a Conference of modern Churchmen, and not of an Ethical Society or of citizens in general.

Doubtless the retention of a Church is due to beliefs and modes of worship which are based on historical or philosophical beliefs outside Ethics. But the result of this is that it is objected that within the sphere of the moral life harm and not good is the result of the existence of a Church. It causes separatism within humanity.

We know that in the New Jerusalem no temple is required, for all the inhabitants can worship anywhere in the city, and can never be away from worship because it is in their hearts. And so for the Church as an association for mutual help in the progress of the moral life, and for performance of good works, it will not be required when all men live the good life always.

But in the stage at which we find ourselves, perhaps always in this mortal life, there seems no prospect of our being able to dispense with the Christian Church even in the moral sphere. That there remain differences between Christian Ethics and other Ethics is just what this selection of "objections" is showing, and so long as any such differences remain there will be a need—apart from differences of theological belief—for a special Christian society within the general social order.

9. The effect in the moral sphere of the possession of a realized ideal of human personality, in Jesus Christ.

To an increasing number of idealists this presents itself as a disadvantage. The conception of freedom has become so fundamental that the presentation of an attained perfection appears incompatible with it. "Wisdom is only free when it asks nothing," says a modern philosopher; morality is only free when it creates its own ideal, is the ethical counterpart. That spiritual activity is teleological is agreed, but what is now in favour (*cf.* both Lotze and M. Bergson) is an immanent teleology which throws out its own designs as it proceeds, and, having accomplished these, projects others and works up to them, and so on indefinitely.

Or, looking within the soul, the efficacy of faith as a factor of the moral character is commonly acknowledged in Ethics: by its exercise the faculties of the soul grow strong. If, however, a complete standard lies before us once and for all there is no further scope for faith; it is exchanged for sight.

To the eye of reason, therefore, the appearance of perfected humanity offers a statical conception which seems inimical to the growth of the soul in the moral sphere.

But Christian Ethics stands firmly on the sufficiency of Christ. It bases this both upon the claims of Jesus, and upon the volume and the quality of the acquiescing response which Christians have accorded to them. Whether we look to the lowly and simple souls who have found their satisfaction in Him as ideal, or to those who have lifted human character to the greatest heights of spiritual life under His influence, we

find that He has received the tribute of being able to stimulate to noblest activities, and to satisfy the loftiest aspirations.

Conclusion. These differences illustrate the relation of what is conveniently called "reason and revelation" in a very important way. I take it that in each case what Christian Ethics commends is the truth; in each case the valuation it assigns is the right one. But this truth or valuation is unexpected from the point of view of reason; it would not have been attained by us had not Christ and His Gospel brought it to light. And even now if we start from the promises of General Ethics alone we should not arrive at it. But if we make a fresh start with the Christian valuations as parts of our apparatus of vision, as factors in our estimates of value, we attain to visions and valuations which surpass in excellence what we should have had without them. In short, they present to us a better and a nobler ideal of life.

But this illumination is not equal in all the cases we have considered. In the last three the specific features of the Christian Ethics stand more markedly over against ethical teaching arrived at apart from the Gospel and the Church, and shed less of the illumination which in the other cases enables us to see where the superiority of the Christian teaching lies. Hence, in these cases, we have truths which we stand "believing where we cannot prove." For them we seek confirmation (1) in their manifest attachment to the general scheme of Christianity, and (2) in the testimony of Christian experience. This is to say that reason is unable, for us, to equate itself with Christian revelation in the moral sphere; and this leads us to remind ourselves that we should be unreasonable if we were to claim for our day and generation such a pinnacle of power of moral valuation as would enable us to assert that we had now attained finality.

THE DEPRECIATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CURRENCY.

By Rev. J. Gamble, B.D., Vicar of St. Mary's, Leigh Woods.

The attacks made upon Christian ethics in print are perhaps less dangerous than those to which these ethics are exposed in practice. If the morality of the Gospel is ever overthrown or displaced this may come about, not from the pressure of verbal arguments and formal reasonings, but because it has come to be regarded as unworkable in the society in which we live. For this reason the Christian ideal is now, as in all past ages, being subjected to a process of corrosion. It is being silently eaten away, and threatens in the process to disappear and vanish into the region of dreams. What we have to dread is the silent and almost imperceptible substitution of some plausible counterfeit for the distinctive and paradoxical standard raised up by the Gospel.

When we talk of any moral system we are, of course, bound to think of what is distinctive of that system, what it has and other systems have not. There are moral duties which are recognised by all moralists and by all religions. These, no doubt, form the bulk of what we call morality. It will, however, hardly be denied that the moral notions of men would have differed in some important respects from what they actually are if Christ had never lived. For one thing, the peculiar connection established between joy and sorrow by Christ's precepts and example seems a new moral discovery.

Previously both in Jewish and Gentile minds the two seeming opposites had stood, if not quite distinct, yet not connected in the peculiar way in which the Gospel has united them. There is no equivalent to the phrase "dying, behold we live," to be found either in the Old Testament or in any heathen philosopher.

Christianity has, however, not only created the phrase, but worked its substance into the lives of ordinary men. To me it seems thus undeniable that the Gospel morality has its distinctive features, and that it differs from other moral systems not only in the degree of emphasis it lays upon some of the universally-recognized virtues, but also by reason of some new qualities which it for the first time commends.

If these distinctive features of Christian morality should in the future become blurred, if the coin, so to speak, should gradually lose its weight and, while nominally remaining the same coin, should lose its original value, then the objectors to Christian ethics would have triumphed even although their formal arguments might have been conclusively answered.

Let me illustrate the process of depreciation in the case of three of the most emphatic of the Gospel's moral calls.

The original Christian society was distinguished by three conspicuous features at least. The society was detached from the existing world. It was possessed by the liveliest sense of brotherhood. And it was animated by the strongest trust in God, as distinct from a confidence in human designs or contrivances.

These were in the primitive Church strong motives. The danger we have reason to anticipate is that they should become weakened and sterilized, and the Christian character thus lose some of its most winning traits. Let us glance at the three in succession.

1. Detachment from the existing world.

I need not say how central and decisive this characteristic was in primitive Christianity. One evidence of this will be quite enough. No advice is given more often to the clergy—and we receive a great deal of advice—than that we should avoid difficult and technical subjects in our discourses, and preach upon sayings which are fundamental and uncontroversial, such as the Beatitudes. The assumption is that the Beatitudes are neither difficult nor technical, and that they are sayings upon which all the world is agreed. What, however, are the Beatitudes? They

are characteristics of people who have detached themselves from the existing world, who have turned their backs upon it, as the old man in Dürer's etching has turned his back upon the city spires, and who are waiting for the Kingdom of Heaven. In all probability it is not seven different groups of people who are contemplated in these sayings, but one group who possess all the seven characteristics. The decisive feature of the group is its separation from the evil world. From this separation the characteristics enumerated naturally issue. These persons are poor[1] because they do not take the proper way to secure riches. They hunger and thirst, they mourn and are persecuted, because they are not at home in their present surroundings, and because they make many enemies. They are peacemakers because they know that most of the things for which men quarrel are not worth quarrelling about. They are pure because they are unspotted by the world, and they are merciful because they realize their own need of mercy. If those who advise the clergy to preach upon the Beatitudes only realized this, they would find these sayings more difficult and controversial than they at first sight appear. And the detachment to which they bear witness is visible on every page of the New Testament, and in every one of the early Christian societies which we have an opportunity of observing.

If we are to preserve the Christian morality we must find a modern equivalent for this early characteristic. Before we think of development we must first think of the original germ. A germ is not "developed" if it is allowed to disappear and another is put in its place. The disciples of Nietzsche—and he has many disciples who have never read his writings—believe Christian detachment to be a harmful and detestable characteristic, regarding it as the parent of weakness, moroseness, and pessimism. The history of the faith presents it to our minds as a noble characteristic amply justified by its works.

But have we found an honest equivalent for it? It may, indeed, be urged that the world we live in is different, and that

[1] I accept the Lucan form of the Beatitudes as the more original.

detachment from it has become unnecessary. It would, however, be difficult to discover any sin which disfigured the world of the first century, and which does not still exist and flourish. The reasons which then urged detachment are still present. Nor can it be truly said that the primitive Christian detachment was a mere result of the belief that the then world was hastening to an imminent doom. For the vital question is not when, but why, the doom was to come. And if we decide that destruction was believed to be imminent because of evils which are still rife, detachment becomes as imperative now as it was then. The word worldliness, however, gives to the present-day preacher one of his most delightful opportunities. It enables him to reduce the word to nothingness, to explain that it does not mean anything which any one of his hearers is at all tempted to do. St. Francis of Assisi, found an equivalent for it in his day. The Jansenists found an equivalent for it in their day. But where shall we look for our equivalent? Not in episcopal palaces amidst "the fatal opulence of bishops," not in cathedral closes, not even always in the humble homes of the parochial clergy. The worldliness of the existing Church—we must confess it to our own shame—is one chief reason of its impotence. We are in sore need of martyrs. Unworldiness to-day is like wisdom. The height saith "it is not in me." The depth saith "it is not in me." It is a name. It has ceased to be a thing.

2. My second illustration is the sense of brotherhood which was so conspicuous in early Christianity. That we have lost this in the obvious meaning of the word will not be denied. Perhaps, however, this was inevitable. Any fellowship becomes less intimate as its scope widens. The mutual helpfulness of the early Christian societies was only possible because those societies were small.

The danger in my mind here is somewhat less obvious. We seem in danger of breaking with the Christian past, and unconsciously falling in with the prevailing materialism by attaching as much importance as we do to people's worldly situation. We think that Christian brotherhood compels us to

labour for a redistribution of the world's wealth, so that everyone shall have a more equal share of this wealth than he has at present. I do not of course deny that this would be a most desirable consummation. But it seems to lie apart from the Christian conception of brotherhood. This is of an equality independent of worldly situation. It is not of decisive consequence from the Christian standpoint what a man's earthly situation is, whether he is rich or poor, slave or freeman, Greek or barbarian. No doubt there are easy and hard situations now as in the days of Christ, and perhaps He would still regard the poor as more likely to listen to His call than the rich. Still the blessedness of which He spoke is accessible from all these positions. Their occupants are all alike objects of God's care, surrounded by the snares of the enemy, pressed by temptation, the prey of sin and death. We have no business in the sanctuary to divide people into classes. We have to address them on the ground of their common humanity. The Church of Christ for many ages made itself the handmaid of the rich and the powerful. It is now engaged, in the supposed interests of brotherhood, in flattering the poor, and telling them that because they are poor they are therefore, and of necessity, the favourites of the Almighty. Nietzsche was in his philosophy, as is well known, consistently and extravagantly aristocratic. He hated Christianity because he believed it to be a democratic religion. Christianity is, however, neither aristocratic nor democratic. To both classes alike it says "labour not for the meat that perisheth." Christian brotherhood is to be achieved not by effacing these superficial and transitory distinctions, but by swallowing them up in a wider unity.

3. My last instance is the Christian trust in God rather than in human contrivance or labour. Here again a silent displacement seems to be in progress. Trust in God means for us only trust in what God enables man to do. But while the creative Spirit works through human endeavours, He also works apart from them. There is an element in history which no human foresight could have foretold, and no human wisdom would have

dared to invoke. The incalculable plays at least as large a part in the affairs of men as does human pre-meditation and design. Many instances of its operation might be produced. One is still before us. It may turn out that the present war will put to rest a domestic dispute of our own which had baffled our wisest statesmanship. Now the primitive Christian seems to have felt more deeply than we do that while Paul may plant, and Apollos water, it is God alone who can give the increase. He left a larger room than we do in His thoughts of the future for the incalculable, and the unforeseen.

For my part I look forward to the future of the world with chastened hope. This hope, however, rests much less upon the success of our own endeavours than upon the surprises which the future holds in store. No doubt this consideration would tend to weaken our efforts if it took exclusive possession of our minds. But surely it is possible to believe that God honours us by inviting us to co-operate with Him, and yet to feel that He can dispense with our aid. No doubt the middle way between an officious restlessness on the one side and an indolent abstention on the other is hard to find. Antonio Straduarius, we know, felt convinced that God could not have made Antonio's violins without Antonio. How he knew this so certainly I confess I cannot tell. It is at least possible that as good violins as any he ever made would have been forthcoming if he had never lived at all. In any case I only wish to point to the fact that Christian trust in God is not the same thing as our modern belief in the inevitableness of progress.

So I have tried to illustrate the gradual depreciation of Christian values which I fear. We may have in the future a morality which will still call itself Christian, but which will no longer possess the distinctive features of the Christian ethic.

We can answer most of the objections to the Christian morality by arguments which ought to be convincing. What we have to dread is a growing indifference to the call of Christ because we have failed to find any practical answers to His most distinctive demands.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

By Rev. J. M. Thompson, M.A., Magdalen College, Oxford.

Ethics is nothing unless it can be universalized. Right which is right for me and wrong for you is not Right at all. Duty which is not always Duty cannot ever be.

We are misled in this matter by our habit of speaking of "The Family," "Business Life," or "The State," as though they were something different from the persons who form the associations and follow the pursuits so described. The persons may, indeed, behave differently in their different capacities. But they are the same persons. Right is still Right for them; Duty is still Duty. Analyse the Family into husband, wife, and children; analyse the State into so many social classes, professions, families; analyse Business into financiers, merchants, clerks—you are soon up against the same constituent individuals. Wherever they go, their consciences travel with them. Whatever they do, they must do it in view of an ideal. There is no getting away from moral claims by any pooling of responsibility, any partisanship, any official position. "A man's a man for a' that." And where there is a man, there is Morality.

But the Right, which is one, can only be expressed in right acts, which are many. A man may pursue the same moral ideal in family life, citizenship, and business, which he pursued as an independent individual; but he will pursue it in a different way, along different paths of conduct. If he marries, if he accepts membership of a nation, or of a Church (we must leave aside the difficult case of membership which is involuntary, and, when realised, undesired), he cannot pursue the Right as he sees it without considering how it looks to others who are pursuing it. He will not surrender his moral freedom. His own way of pursuit is the best for him. But he will better it by

comparison and criticism. Not only in this way will his conduct change. The widening of his personality, as he becomes a father, or a citizen, has also a limiting effect. There may come a time in a man's life when the cause that he champions, or the message which he is delivering, demands his death rather than his life. But a married man is not free to stake his wife's happiness, or his children's prospects, for a moral ideal which might demand the risk of his own. He marries not merely for morality, but for the survival of the race; or rather, survival becomes for him an expression of the moral ideal. He is an architect of the foundations upon which alone morality can be built. Ibsen's *Brand* is a great study of this problem. The same enlargement and the same limitations are involved on a bigger scale in the relationship between the individual and the State. The *raison d'être* of the State is primarily self-preservation, in order that various material and moral benefits may be secured to the classes, families, and individuals who compose it. Its second and third and fourth aims may be religion, morality, what you will. Its first is always survival. There is just this amount of truth in the immoralism of the Prussian *Real-politik*. The individual Englishman rightly prefers death to dishonour. "Who dies, if England lives?" But if, in August, 1914, our intervention for Freedom and Justice had meant certain defeat, would the Government have been right to intervene? The Prussian immoralism does not so much consist in saying that national safety, when really threatened, overrides all other considerations, as in refusing to add that it is, after all, a means to a moral and spiritual end—national righteousness, international justice, and a genuine desire for the safety and independence of other nations.

There are therefore two parts to the problem of Ethics. The first is to universalize the great moral principles. The second is to express them in conduct appropriate to particular occasions. If as a nation we have dealings, whether by way of diplomacy, or trade, or war, with other nations, we have

them as men, as moral beings, and as Christians. The Right which we recognise in the inner circles of relationship, we must recognise in the outer also. And, if we would do this, we must not mechanically extend precepts and conduct from the inner circles, where they are appropriate, to the outer, where they may not be, but try to find their true equivalents, to express and safeguard the same moral principles in the new relationship, as thoroughly as they did in the old.

II.

Christian Ethics and the Ethics of Christ are not the same thing. The Ethics of Christ means the moral principles which Jesus taught, and by which He lived. Christian Ethics means a system of moral principles, a rule of conduct which are partly developed out of Christ's teaching, and partly due to its amalgamation with other ethical principles and practices of every people, and every age. Our title speaks only of "Christian Ethics." Cannot we, then, ignore the Ethics of Christ—or rather, assume that it is fully embodied in Christian Ethics? This involves the question whether or not Christ's contribution to Ethics has been properly understood. In the parallel case of His theological teaching, there is a wide-spread feeling that Christian Dogma has seriously misinterpreted what Christ taught about Himself and His mission in some important respects; and it is allowed that the doctrines of the Church are open to revision according to scriptural truth. May it not be the same with regard to Christian Ethics? Are men's moral predispositions any weaker than their theological prejudices? Is the Church less likely to have declined from Jesus' ideal of conduct than from His conception of God? May there not be a similar need to re-examine Christian Ethics in the light of the Ethics of Christ?

Jesus was a religious and moral visionary,—religious first, because He was prepared to sacrifice His life, with all its moral opportunities, to secure the kingdom of God; but never religious apart from, or at the expense of morals. To love

one's neighbour was not merely the complement of loving God; it was the same thing. A visionary too—partly because all His thoughts were coloured by the belief in the imminence of the great Apocalypse, partly because He cared for no system and followed no rule, but lived and taught in moments of deep insight and intense conviction. That was always the prophetic as opposed to the legalistic temperament. Greatest of the Prophets, Jesus quarrelled with the finest type of legalistic piety, partly (no doubt) because it tended to separate religion from morality, but partly also because it had reduced righteousness to a system, and made an itinerary of the way to heaven. Christ left behind Him no system of Ethics, but a series of pictures—outlined in maxims and parables, and filled in by His most holy life—of the deepest truths of moral experience. The Gospels are not a manual of morality, but an album of moral masterpieces. They do not tell us what to do under particular circumstances; they show us a character which, if we can make it ours, will enable us to solve our own moral problems.

There are some definite ethical precepts in the Gospels. They were given to illustrate moral principles. But Christ did not mean the principles to be admired, and the precepts ignored. He was speaking about a state of society in which acts of voluntary impoverishment, and refusal to retaliate, could be carried out; He was speaking to people who had given up, or could give up, their ordinary way of life for this very purpose; and he contemplated a fast-approaching change in the whole order of things, which made it idle to inquire whether these maxims could be universalized. In the different order of society in which we live, these precepts cannot be practised without first providing—in the medicant freedom of a friar's life, or in an isolated community—an artificial atmosphere. The principles which they expressed still stand; but they need new expression. The modern *imitatio Christi* is a process of finding equivalents. The pity of it is that the Christian Church should be satisfied that it has found such

equivalents in a way of life hardly distinguishable from that of the non-Christian world.

The moral virtues upon which Christ laid most stress seem to have been these:—Love, Humility, Forgiveness, Unworldliness, Inwardness, and returning good for evil. Taken together, these virtues constitute a very definite type of moral ideal—a type which can be studied in its purest form in the Gospels, in the ethical parts of the Pauline Epistles, and in the lives of Christian Saints, and which, wherever it occurs, and whether or not it commends itself to the world, would be recognised as Christian. It may not cover the whole ground of Ethics. Christ's outlook was, to some extent, limited by the society in which He lived. Problems of property and business did not interest Him. He had nothing to say about citizenship, or international relations. He aimed at satisfying the moral rather than the aesthetic and intellectual part of man's nature. There was, therefore, need for some such development as that which has transformed the Ethics of Christ into Christian Ethics. Nevertheless, there is something that the world needs even more than a well-proportioned system of Ethics, viz., moral enthusiasm; and that is most readily called out by a definite type of moral ideal, by insistence upon a single dominant virtue, or upon a limited blend of virtues, and by prescribing principles of conduct which are striking enough to appeal to the imagination, and difficult enough to challenge the will. That need Christ met in a unique way. And, unless Christian Ethics is to lose any distinctively Christian character, that is the need which the Church must meet to-day, or stand convicted of failure. It must not deny the need of development, or reject the living Christ in the name of the dead. But it must constantly revise its moral standards, as it revises its doctrinal formularies, in the light of what Christ really did and taught. There have not been so many perfect Christians, so many societies based on love, so many States practising humility and forgiveness towards one another, that we can yet confidently pronounce

Christ's ideas to be unworkable. If we constantly try to apply them we may at least hope to bring about a state of things in which they are applicable.

III.

The application of Christian Ethics to International Relations may be considered with special reference to three problems:—Patriotism, Commerce, and War.

1. It is significant that Christianity, which sprang from the most patriotic religion of the ancient world, which was preached by twelve Apostles to the twelve tribes of Israel, and which was inspired by the hope of a Jewish millenium, was essentially a protest against nationalism in religion, and incurred persecution on that very ground,—first from the representatives of Judaism, and then from the Roman authorities, to whom the security of the Empire seemed bound up with the worship of Caesarism. The protest was the more effective because it was made, not by an individualistic, but by a socialistic religion; only the basis of this society was spiritual, its laws were the Ethics of Christ, and its final allegiance was to a kingdom not of this world. This protest still stands. If Patriotism requires that we should subordinate justice and truth to the need of self-preservation, that we should hate our enemies, and try to do them every possible injury, and that we should make military prestige and material prosperity the aims of our home and foreign policy, then Patriotism and Christianity have some serious quarrels to make up before they can agree together. Our Patriotism in the past has been too much of this kind, and our Christianity, instead of protesting against it, has been too ready to acquiesce in it as inevitable. But it is nothing of the sort. True Patriotism is, no doubt, to love one's country as it is; but it is also to believe that it can become more loveable. It includes both a natural affection for the real, and a supernatural affection for the ideal. Abbé Loisy writes:—

> "Everyone should have experienced that the country is his mother in the fullest meaning of the phrase. She is the shrine of his humanity. It is right to discourse on the brotherhood of nations; but we can only

serve the universal republic efficiently through working chiefly for one's own commonwealth, by reverencing it, and being devoted to it. To love it usefully, one must learn to understand it. To shut up oneself in a narrow, selfish, and sullen nationalism is to do it a grievous wrong. What has made Germany odious, and will bring about its ruin, is that form of blind and covetous patriotism which recognizes nothing but self, which esteems and admires oneself alone, despising and oppressing all else. A civilized nation which gives itself up to these feelings is likely to become insane. Our country will probably become all the greater if we think we have never done enough to make it great. If we understand where its true greatness lies, we shall not incur the risk of fanaticism. France is a place set apart in the midst of the nations, because she was the earliest to lisp the new gospel of truth, liberty, justice, and fraternity. This ideal was infinitely greater than herself; and our chief error in the past was to think we had realised it because we had hit upon an imperfect phrase. The essential worth of a nation, as of an individual, is its moral worth. Ours will be in the evermore fervent and enlightened practice of an ideal."*

M. Loisy suggests that this enlightened Patriotism transcends Christianity. But that is not the case, unless the development of Christian Ethics, and its constant revision in the light of the Gospel, are excluded. Rather, the Church is to be thought of as the conscience of the State—as a society pledged to uphold the Christian moral ideal in international relations; to teach that, instead of competing for the lowest prizes that life has to offer, the nations should co-operate for the highest; that instead of vilifying our enemies, we should try to see and bring out what is best in them; and that national prestige ought not to rest upon the size of our army, but upon righteousness, justice, temperance, and our contribution to the common stock of beauty and truth.

2. A system which sets nations in competition with nations for the capture of the world's markets, besides being a great provocation to war, is not easy to reconcile with the religion of love, and unworldliness, whose ideal it is to return good for evil. Here, perhaps, for a "nation of shop-keepers," lies the greatest temptation to deny the applicability of Christian Ethics, and the greatest danger of perpetuating under the cover of peace that very hatred and selfishness which we condemn as

* *The War and Religion*, p. 83.

causes of war. The recent Paris Conference, representing Allies who are fighting to crush militarism, nevertheless proposes to inaugurate peace by declaring an economic war against Germany. Whether or not special measures will be needed to meet the financial situation at the end of the war, only economists can decide. But any Christian can see that it is wrong as well as stupid to create new causes of hatred, and to take advantage of victory to cripple the legitimate recovery of the enemy. In the *Manchester Guardian* of July 26th, 1916, Mr. Lowes Dickinson writes:—

> "There are, very likely, practices that ought to be forbidden in the competition of international trade. But, if so, they ought to be forbidden by all nations for all nations. There may be industries that considerations of security suggest should be kept under national control; for if the enmity is to continue, we never know what foreign nation is to be our enemy. To a country like Germany, with its large and increasing population, industry, and commerce, the threat to cut her off from raw materials and markets throughout the huge dependencies ruled by other Powers, is a threat to destroy her existence. It will, I believe, become increasingly evident, when history takes the place of mythology in judging the causes of the war, that this fear has been the dominant motive of German policy. The resolutions of the Paris Conference propose to realise that fear. What sort of a peace condition is that?"

It is not merely war that we are fighting against, but warlike conditions and the warlike temper. It is not merely peace that we are trying to establish, but peaceful conditions and the peaceful temper. If peacefulness were practised by Christians in their business relations with one another, together with the other Christian virtues that St. Paul classes with it—"love, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—it would soon become impossible to pursue the antitheses of all these ideals in our commercial dealings with other nations.

3. Christ Himself never had to face the problem of war. But we are almost bound to infer, not so much from certain of His maxims, which might be explained away as Oriental hyperbole, or *interimsethik*, as from His whole theory of virtue, with its stress upon love, forgiveness, and the returning of good for evil, that He disliked the appeal to force. If He allowed it

once, at the Clearing of the Temple, it was for a purely spiritual end, and this precedent cannot cover any lower aim. If the present war is a "Holy War," a "Crusade," such as Christ could approve, we must at least be able to show that we covet no territory, seek no financial reward, and have no motive in our hearts but a zeal for God's glory. Those are difficult conditions. Indeed, when we look at the full meaning of Christ's moral ideal of love, working itself out in humility, forgiveness, refusal to retaliate, and the rest, can we say of any war that Christ would approve of it? It may become, under certain conditions, the lesser of two evil alternatives. It can never be, in itself, anything but evil.

This conclusion is not vitiated by the wonderful display of Christian virtues which has been called out by the present war—virtues of action and of passion such as we hardly suspected to lurk in ordinary human nature. This cannot justify war any more than the disciplinary value of suffering justifies disease. To close our hospitals would not be to increase the sum of virtue. None but a German theorist would deliberately encourage war in order to produce the manly virtues. The line of moral advance does not coincide with the natural laws which correct over-population by fire and pestilence, and use war to eliminate the unfit: it runs counter to them. Public opinion has gone far towards abolishing duelling, and men are no less manly. In time (but only with our help) it will abolish war, and find moral methods to eliminate the unfit.

A Christian, then, will hate war, and believe it a great evil. He will engage in it only when not to do so seems, upon Christian principles, an even greater wrong. He will do everything that he can for its abolition.

What can he do? (1) He may think it right to become a "conscientious objector," and refuse to take any part in the crime of war. If so, he judges it a greater wrong to hurt his enemies than to let them hurt his friends. He has a right to judge so. But most men think differently, and he cannot expect to escape persecution at their hands.

Nevertheless, whilst every Christian ought to hate war, and should always refuse to use force for purely personal ends, Christianity does not prejudge the choice of the individual in particular cases, where motives of love and unselfishness pull both ways. He must decide for himself which is the greater love, that of humanity or that of country. Following Christ's example, he will not shrink from any merely physical consequences which his choice may entail. And, whichever way he chooses, it is not for other Christians to condemn him.

2. There were many influences at work before the war which, although they were not strong enough to counteract the war fever, would in course of time have rendered us immune to it. Some of these were the selfish interests of trade and finance. Some were the unselfish activities of international socialism, science, art, learning, travel, and so forth. These will survive the war, and will give increasing opportunities to peace-makers. More directly concerned with war were the Hague Peace Conferences. They aimed at ameliorating war, rather than at abolishing it, and they did not succeed in setting up any authority to enforce their conventions. Yet it will be worth while to remind the Powers, after the war, that in 1907 they declared themselves

> "Animated by a strong desire to concert for the maintenance of general peace; resolved to promote by their best efforts the friendly settlement of international disputes; recognising the solidarity uniting the members of the society of civilized nations; desirous of extending the empire of law, and of strengthening the appreciation of international justice; and sharing the opinion that it is expedient to record in an International Agreement the principles of equity and right on which are based the security of States and the welfare of peoples."*

These are principles to which every Christian will assent; and whether or not they can be made effective depends, in the long run, upon the force of Christian opinion in the nations which profess them.

3. Whatever way we look at the question, we seem to come to the same conclusion. There can be no effective application of Christian Ethics to international relations except through

* Final Act of the Second Peace Conference (1907), p. 17.

the influence of a society which really believes in and practices love, humility, forgiveness, unworldliness, inwardness, and the returning of good for evil. Ought not the Church to be such a society? Perhaps it is an impracticable ideal. But would not that be true to the genius of Christianity, and not a weakness but a strength? Christianity began in a dream and ends in a dream. It is the very antithesis of "sanctified commonsense." It is poetic, idealistic, not a little illusory. Its greatest figures have been martyrs, visionaries, ascetics, quixotic persons, fools for Christ's sake. But that has been its power. That has converted the world. That is what has lifted ordinary men into heroism, saintship, divinity.

An enlightened patriotism, a purified business life, a peaceful temper which will compose quarrels without fighting, are all corollaries of Christ's Ethical teaching. They will follow in their proper course, if only we can solve the problem, "How can I become a Christian?"

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND SOCIAL REFORM.

By the Rev. C. H. S. Matthews, M.A., Vicar of St. Peter's-in-Thanet.

The subject is vast, and it is urgent. It has, of course, long been urgent, but no one can now be blind to its urgency. For already the War has created new problems, and it is obvious that, owing to the vast changes in the industrial situation which the war has brought, the declaration of peace will create others even more serious. The individual and the Church will have to face these problems whether they will or no. The day is long past when men could draw a hard and fast line between spiritual and secular matters—when the Church or the converted Christian could stand apart from social questions "caring for none of these things."

Canon Scott Holland, in his lecture on the Nineteenth Century, in the volume entitled *Our Place in Christendom*, has shown the disastrous result of the divorce between religion and industrial development in the last century. To-day when the failure of humanitarianism apart from religion is almost as conspicuous as the failure of religion which has tried to be divine without first learning to be human, we can hardly fail to acknowledge, at least in theory, that man has put asunder what God meant to be one.

And men are feeling this, thank God, in both camps. Earnest social reformers outside the Church are looking wistfully (if not at present very hopefully) to the Church to see whether she will not even now attempt to rise to the height of her own professed ideals: and within the Church there is a deep sense of failure which is driving many to a deeper questioning of the true content of the religious tradition which they inherit and, above all, filling them with an eager desire to learn how they may bring to those earnest souls without the succour of which they confess their need.

From the point of view of the Church, one of the most hopeful signs of the times is the dissatisfaction of earnest men of all schools of thought with things as they are. Mere discontent is no good, but a divine discontent with conventional standards and practices is the parent of all progress.

Few modern Evangelicals can be content with an "other-worldliness" which regards the poor from the detached and complacent standpoint of Dr. Watts, who sang—

"Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more;
For I have food while others starve
And beg from door to door."

Nor can they look upon the securing of house-property in a heaven beyond the grave as the end of existence here below, as set forth in other immortal verses:—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to ev'ry fear
And wipe my weeping eyes."

Or again,—

"Nothing is worth a thought beneath,
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies.
How make my own election sure,
And when I fail on earth, secure
A mansion in the skies." *

Few modern Catholics, on the other hand, can be content to regard the duties of the Christian religion as adequately fulfilled by the man who is merely punctilious in going to his "duties," hears Mass with regularity, and receives Communion fasting, while displaying no kind of interest in the social welfare of his poorer brethren. And few modern liberal Churchmen, I imagine, can live as contentedly as some of their predecessors have lived in the academic seclusion of a world of ideas walled off from the life of common men and women. So men of all schools are being driven to the attempt to discover afresh the true content of Christian Faith and its practical social implications.

And it becomes ever more and more plain that whether you begin with the Church, as I find it more natural to do, or with the individual Christian or non-Christian, you are driven to consider social questions. If you start with the individual you are bound to consider the influence upon his whole personal life and development, of his social environment. If you start with the Church, believing, as I believe, that the duty of the Church is to preach the Kingdom of God and preach it as intended to be realised, as we have been taught to pray, "on earth as it is in Heaven," you are no less surely driven to deal with life in its social aspect. For I think that whatever view we may take of the apocalyptic element in the Gospels we can agree with Dr. Rashdall, Dalman, and other writers, that "The Kingdom of God, after all, means only the reign of God." If we go on to agree that God is love and that Christian ethics is love in action, and that, as Mr. Will Reason says, "Love as spoken of in the New Testament is not the passionate desire to win someone who attracts us; in its strongest manifestation, on the contrary, it is the pouring out of one's power on behalf of those who naturally repel us—the

* *I ought to acknowledge my indebtedness for these quotations to a speech I once heard in Australia, by Dr. Mercer, then Bishop of Tasmania.*

unfortunate, the squalid and even our enemies. It is the Will for Good to those who most need it,"—we are again plunged into the thick of social problems of all kinds.

The Church, then, is to preach the coming of this Social Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. It will preach the re-creation of the world as the Will of God, who is righteous and loving. It will be true to the apocalyptic idea in picturing this Kingdom as given from above by God, and as coming sometimes in cataclysmic fashion, if at other times by slow and almost imperceptible degrees. But while it emphasizes the transcendent character of the Kingdom, it will emphasize no less the fact that, since love is the law of the divine life, God cannot impose His Kingdom upon an unwilling world, but can only do His creative work through those disinterested souls who are willing to co-operate with Him and with one another for that purpose. First, then, it is the duty of the Church at all times to seek a vision of the ideal Kingdom, the law of which is love, and, secondly, it is her duty fearlessly to criticize the actual in the light of this vision. And she must, obviously, begin with herself, if she is to bear effective witness to the world, and repent where she finds, as I think she must find, that while she has treated the social evils as no concern of hers, she has become the active participator in some of the worst of them.[1]

There is, I believe, urgent need that the Church should criticize, fearlessly, actual conditions of housing, of wages, and of employment of labour, urging upon all her members the duty of trying to find remedies for existing evils.

But I do not think that it is the duty of the officers or representatives of the Church, as such, to propound particular solutions for particular problems, or to decide, as a general rule, between rival schemes of reform. These are matters which must be decided by the whole community, through its own representatives chosen for that purpose. But while evil conditions exist, the Church, if she is to be true to her trust, must

[1] I may, perhaps, be allowed to refer those who wish to follow up this line of thought, to the Essays by the Rev. H. Anson and the Rev. F. L. Donaldson respectively, in the book *Faith or Fear*, which I have recently edited.

ever be on the side of progress; she must, through her official leaders, preach the need of reform. She may protest, if the need arises, against any proposals which are in obvious contradiction of the law of love, *e.g.*, any political measure which seems to exploit the helpless poor in the interests of the powerful rich. Above all, she must cultivate in her members the habit of appealing, and of responding, only to Christian motives. The accepted standard of political appeal, especially at election times, has been deplorably low. There is good reason to hope that the war has shown the more faithful of our politicians that the appeal to self-sacrifice in a worthy cause is more powerful, with the generality of men, than the appeal to mere self-interest.

If the Church can drive that lesson home she will do much to forward the cause of social reform, and to raise the level of political life. I can think of only one other duty lying upon the Church as a society at this time in connection with the subject of social reform, and that is the duty of urging upon her members the need of the study of social questions in the light of the ethical principles of the Gospel. The Christian Church must maintain that the law of love is of universal application. But no one can help seeing that the real difficulty is to work that law out in practice in the intensely complicated social life of our day. The Church must train her members to tackle social problems, however controversial, in the spirit of goodwill, which is the spirit of Christ, and she can do much good by encouraging the social study of these problems—by such methods as those of the fellowships with their "Social Commissions," or by the formation in various parishes of Study Circles. The Social Service Committee at the Congregational Union is setting a splendid example at the present time by issuing a series of Study Circle text books, from the first of which, by Mr. Will Reason, entitled, *The Issue of Personal Faith in Social Service,* I have already quoted.

II.

I now pass on to deal, very briefly, with the duty of the individual Churchman. This I conceive to be a matter of

personal vocation. I think that it is really necessary to urge in these days that it is not the duty of all individuals to fulfil the obligations of social service in exactly the same way. Personal vocation must be determined partly by the circumstances in which the individual finds himself; partly by his own natural gifts and aptitudes (*e.g.*, some men are not fitted to compile or deal with statistical tables, others are), and this personal vocation must be sought by the prayerful consideration of opportunity and aptitude.

It follows that the vocation of the clergyman will, in some ways, be different because he is a clergyman, from that of the layman. It will be his duty to preach in the pulpit such principles as I have tried to lay down, claiming politics as within the sphere of a religion meant to cover the whole of life; but avoiding party politics in the pulpit where he cannot be answered back. This preaching of principles is often fruitful of the most practical results. I have known a farmer re-build his labourers' cottages as the result of an address on the social aspect of Christianity.

Out of the pulpit the clergyman has the same right as anyone else to take sides on political questions, but since it is obvious that the party system, which lumps together in one programme all kinds of unrelated schemes, is really out of date, the clergyman will probably feel that it is his duty to work, and teach others to work for the reform of our present system of representative Government. He will always be ready to give an answer, for what it is worth and no more, to any appeal made to him for counsel as to the right attitude of the individual in regard to any political question of the day. He will encourage the formation of Social Study Circles among the members of his own congregation. The duty of the layman as a Christian is surely to enter to the fullest extent of his powers into the political and municipal life of his own town; to study and learn to discuss social problems in a Christian spirit of goodwill, and to take up such practical work as his vocation—discovered as I have already indicated—leads him to.

THEISM OR PANTHEISM?*

By Rev. Canon Rashdall, D.C.L., D.Litt., F.B.A.

Opinions differ as to what has been or is likely to be the effect of the war upon religion in our own country or in others, and many answers to this question are possible. But of this I do not think there can be any doubt—that it has made people feel, as many of them have not felt before, how incomparably important, above all other articles of faith, is the first article of all—the belief in God—the question whether we do or do not believe in God, and the question what sort of God it is that we believe in.

The war has, indeed, as other wars have done, led to a recrudescence of very irrational and unworthy ideas of God. I will say nothing of the German belief in a purely German God —a God whose character is best expressed as brute force, and who favours the men and the nations who are likest to Himself.

This war has been so manifestly on our side a war in the interests of justice and international morality that we have hardly felt the temptation to think or speak of God as a Being whose chief *raison d'être* is the extension of the British Empire. But in many of the utterances which the war has called forth—and I am afraid in some of the appeals which have appeared in connexion with the National Mission—there has been a good deal of crudity and a good deal of superstition, against which we cannot protest too earnestly. The war has been variously explained as due to Luther's neglect of Episcopacy, as a punishment for Welsh Disestablishment, or for the prevalence of German liberal Theology. Among people incapable of such

* Sermon preached in Wadham College Chapel, to the members of the Oxford Conference.

extreme absurdities, there has still been far too much disposition (as it seems to me) to think of the war as an event deliberately brought about by a special intervention of God as a judgement or a punishment, though opinions may differ as to what exactly it is a punishment for. A desire to avoid national self-complacency has made some good people insist that the blame for it must at least partially be found in ourselves as well as in the Germans. The lesson of Christ's saying about the tower of Siloam has not been adequately learnt even by some far from thoughtless people. So again much of the language which we have heard about the war, and about the kind of way in which prayer may be expected to work, seems to suggest that many religious people have refused to revise their conceptions of God's action in the light of the modern discovery that God works by general laws. On the other hand, among more thoughtful people it is evident that the problem of evil has been felt more acutely than ever before. People are showing more disposition to ask themselves seriously what they mean by the Omnipotence of God. In most of what has been written on the subject by people who think, there has been shown an increased willingness to admit that Omnipotence cannot mean the power to do anything and everything, any combination of things, that we may take into our heads to imagine, to bring about any end by any means or no means at all. Preachers and writers have shown more disposition to recognize that in some way or other we must revise that way of thinking about the world which represents God's action as a succession of isolated and disconnected "interferences"—as though God from moment to moment decreed what was to happen, which side was to win a battle, who was to be killed, and who was to be wounded, without any regard to what has gone before, or to any general laws or principles of divine government. The necessity for a more systematic and more philosophical thinking out of the supreme riddle of the Universe is being more generally recognized—even by minds generally averse from anything like a philosophical treatment of religious problems.

When the difficulties of the popular, ultra-anthromorphic conception of God are acutely felt, the natural tendency of the human mind—or at least of minds too religious or too philosophical to acquiesce in a blank, materialistic denial of God—is to depersonalize the conception of God, and to fall back upon ways of thinking of a more or less pantheistic character The tendency generally exhibits itself at first in a strong insistence upon the idea of God's "immanence." Sometimes that word is brandished about as the watch-word of all enlightened Theology, as though it was a sufficient solution of all difficulties, a solution which itself required no explanation at all. When we try to get to the bottom of what people mean by that "blessed word," we find very often that God is thought of as a Mind which somehow pervades Nature without exactly creating or directing, causing or controlling, anything at all. From that the transition is easy to the view which thinks of God as mind in general without being *a* Mind And then God comes to be virtually identified with the aggregate of all individual minds. Or in definitely philosophical circles we are told that God is a logical "Universal" inherent in all things but without consciousness, without purpose, without ethical characteristics of any kind. Or He is represented as an unconscious Will, or as a mysterious substratum, or a "higher Unity" which underlies Mind and Matter without being exactly either. Or He becomes a name for an abstract rationality of things; or, lastly, we are frankly told that He is simply the laws of nature or nature itself. The temptation to these modes of thought is strong among those who have felt either the practical and obvious difficulties which the facts of life present to the Christian conception of God, or the more subtle philosophical objections which force themselves upon the mind which seriously attempts to grapple with the metaphysical problem. The temptation seems to be particularly strong for men brought up in a strict system of orthodox theology,—men who have thought themselves out of that conception of Christianity which makes revelation consist essentially in a series

of arbitrary interference *ab extra* with the normal and natural course of things. We see that tendency in an extreme form in the writings of Renan. We see it in the more extreme of the Catholic Modernists. I will not say that M. Loisy's conception of God is pantheistic, for (though he sometimes repudiates the idea of personality in God) he elsewhere, even in his latest writings, uses language which seems to be fairly theistic. But the tendency is unmistakably there—prevented, I think, from developing itself fully by his intense belief (so unlike the ethical scepticism of Renan) in an absolute morality revealed by conscience. Where this belief is weaker, the pantheistic trend becomes still more unmistakable. And this trend constitutes, I believe, the great danger of liberal movements in theology. What attaches so many really religious minds to that conception of miracles which makes them in the strictest sense a violation of the laws of nature by the arbitrary, *ad hoc,* fiat of Omnipotence is the fact that such a belief does assert in an unmistakable manner that personal conception of God for which the great majority of religious minds—perhaps I might say all religious minds, except that small minority who are attracted by the extremer kinds of mysticism—naturally crave. Such minds will probably continue to cling to this idea of supernatural and irregular interference so long as they believe that without it the inevitable tendency of reflective thought is to a representation of God which ends in the practical identification of God with nature, and a nature thought of as wholly non-moral.

I do not think that many will be disposed to deny that what the religious mind does naturally crave for is what is generally described as a personal God, or (if that name be disliked on account of some of its associations), a God who really thinks, feels, wills, loves—a God whom we are justified in thinking of after the analogy of human self-consciouness, a God whom we can love, whom we can pray to, whom we can co-operate with. We cannot love or imitate a force, or a tendency, or an abstract universal, or a nature in which good and evil are mixed as they are here and now, or an entity which has no

thought or feeling of its own, but becomes conscious of itself as much in Caesar Borgia as in Christ. Still less can we pray to such a Deity, or feel ourselves in communion with Him. It is not indeed necessary to prayer that we should think of God as interfering with the laws of nature, as able and willing to violate any such law if only we entreat Him hard enough, as diverting a bullet from the man whose friends at home pray much for him, and directing its course against him who has fewer friends. But it *is* necessary that we should be able to think of God as consciously willing moral ends, as having a character which expresses itself in those ends, as inspiring and expressing Himself in the very desires that we feel, the prayers that we utter, and the efforts that we make, so far as they are directed towards that which is absolutely and intrinsically good. We want to be able to feel that we are co-operating with Him, and that He is co-operating with us. It is not necessary for all this that we should think of Him as "omnipotent" in the popular sense; but it is necessary that we should be able to think of the laws of nature as expressing His Will, and of that Will as ultimately directed towards the good—however exactly we conceive of the obstacle that prevents that Will being fully and immediately realised. I can quite understand the position of those who believe in duty and goodness without believing in God at all, who are prepared to struggle and fight for the good in the dark, and to make the best of a world in which, after all, evil usually has the upper hand; but I do find it difficult to understand how we can be much helped in these struggles by a belief in God which falls short of what is usually understood by Theism, how we can be said to worship in spirit and in truth, unless we believe that He whom we worship is not less a Spirit than ourselves, however much more He is than all that we mean when we think of ourselves as minds or wills or selves.

But here it may be asked, "Granted that this is the sort of God that we want, can we honestly and reasonably profess such a belief?" Undoubtedly we must be loyal to the truth. I am not going to defend any of the various devices by which it is

now fashionable to justify the acceptance of a religious belief without any grounds at all or on grounds which the intellect rejects. No doubt the experienced fact that a certain belief about the universe tends to the highest type of life, that it helps our struggle after the good is, as far as it goes, a reason for believing that view to be true; but that argument already implies a certain measure of belief about the ultimate nature of things. It assumes that the universe is ultimately reasonable, or at all events that it is more likely to be reasonable than not, and that is a belief for which we must have some kind of reason. I do not defend the evasion of intellectual problems on practical or emotional grounds.

This is not the time or the place for an attempt to deal in any systematic way with the philosophical grounds for believing in God—a God such as the religious consciousness spontaneously demands. But I should just like to point out to you, very briefly and untechnically, that all the considerations which lead to a belief in God, really require a belief in the kind of God which religion demands, and not to a belief in the Deity of Pantheism. Orthodox apologists are fond of suggesting that philosophy leads us as far as Pantheism but no further, and that we cannot get any further without a revelation guaranteed by miracle. I believe that this view of the matter is fundamentally untrue.

After all, if you examine the various arguments used by philosophers or theologians to show the existence of God, they are all in the last resort based upon the analogy of the human mind. The philosopher examines the idea of matter, and shows that all that we know about matter is unintelligible except as the counterpart, the object, the other (as they say) of mind. Or he examines the idea of causality or of force, and shows that at bottom we draw those ideas from experience of our own conscious activity in willing. Or he insists on the unity and interrelatedness of things, and shows how difficult it is to conceive of this unity except as a system comprehended and controlled by self-consciousness. Or he will point to the

indications of purpose in the universe, and show how impossible it is to explain the simplest biological phenomena without it. Or he appeals to our conviction of the superiority of mind to aught else in the universe, and insists that the highest must supply us with a better and truer conception of the ultimate nature of the whole than the lowest. Or he turns to the existence in our minds of the conception of an absolute right and wrong, and contends that this conception has as good a claim to be taken as a revelation of the ultimate nature of the universe as any other of our intellectual concepts or categories.

Now what I want to insist upon is that all these modes of thought imply that the mind that we infer to be at the root of things is a mind something like our own minds, however much superior to them it may be. Most of the more pantheistic ways of thinking (though they may perhaps use complimentary-sounding terms like "super-moral") really imply at bottom that God is something less than mind, that He is to be thought of in terms of matter or of force rather than of mind. Mind does not occupy space; and therefore, if we use the word "immanent" at all, we must remember that, applied to God, it must be as metaphorical a term as the rival term "transcendent." The popular use of the term "immanent" tends to make of mind a sort of attenuated matter which finds its way into the interstices of ordinary matter, or a sort of physical force or imponderable fluid, a more subtle and etherial electricity, or the like.

All these modes of thought are really going back upon the idea that the ultimate principle of things is to be thought of as mind. The only mind we know is more or less personal mind, and the highest mind we know is the most personal.

We know nothing of impersonal mind, or of mind without will, or of a will which is not conscious. Above all, if we are serious in thinking that the law which reveals itself to us in conscience, is also in some sense the law of the universe, it is difficult to give any meaning to this assertion if we do not mean that the happenings of the universe are caused by a Will,

consciously desiring and aiming at the good which expresses itself in our moral ideals so far as they are true ideals.

Examine any one of the philosophical arguments used to show the existence of God, and you will find, I believe, that what they all point to is a conscious, thinking, willing, loving God. If we cannot accept that conclusion, the arguments are worth nothing at all. We do not really escape the difficulties of theism by attempting a sort of compromise, a half-way house between theism and naturalism.

By all means let us admit the infinity of our ignorance, by all means let us recognise that every one of the terms which we use to describe God must be used (as the schoolmen say) *sensu eminentiori*; by all means let us confess that we cannot in detail think out or picture to ourselves exactly how God thinks, or wills, or feels. But if we make up our minds to say with Plato that mind is king, that mind rules all things, then let us not attenuate our decision by denying to God just the highest and the best attributes that we imply when we use the word mind.

Certainly we must remember how little we know: certainly we must not dissemble the difficulties that we cannot meet, the problems that we cannot answer; but I do venture to suggest that full-blooded Christian Theism with (as it were) a background of confessed Agnosticism is a far more philosophical attitude than a Pantheism which professes to know and to explain everything, but does so only by the use of language which on closer examination turns out to be self-contradictory or unmeaning.

I do not deny the difficulty which there is in combining these two sides of the truth, both of which are forced upon us by the present state of knowledge—that God is a self-conscious mind whose Will expresses itself in nature, and that He works by law. The subject demands a kind of consideration which cannot be given to it in the few minutes which remain to me, but I will venture to offer one or two suggestions which, though they may be quite insufficient for a theoretical solution of the problem, may help us practically to keep active in our minds these two

complementary aspects of God as He is now revealed to the modern world.

1. We ought not to be afraid of fully and frankly recognizing that God's power is in a sense limited. The word "Omnipotent" originally meant, I believe, a God who rules the universe as opposed to the merely local or department deities of Polytheism. The obstacle to His doing all that goodness would inspire Him to do, to His causing nothing but good without any admixture of evil, must be thought of (as it seems to me) neither as imposed from without, nor, on the other hand, as arbitrarily imposed upon Himself by what some people call a "self-limitation," but as springing from that ultimate nature of things which for the Theist is identical with God's own nature. The necessity for this admixture of evil may be supposed to consist precisely in the necessity which is part of God's nature, with a view to the ultimate good of the world, of working by general laws. If God does will laws which are often so cruel in their operation, if He allows or, to speak frankly, causes all the untold miseries of the present war without interfering to stop all this pain and sin, and to bring about a speedier triumph of right, we may depend upon it that there is a very good reason for His doing so—that He sees it to be necessary as a means to a higher good. If God has a reason for working in accordance with law, the fact that He does so will not prevent our thinking of Him as a Person and a righteous Person. At bottom most of the more philosophical theologians have recognised this sort of limitation to the power of God, though not all of them have been so honest as to say frankly with Origen that He has a "limited power."

2. We must remember that the ultimate foundation of our belief in God's essential goodness is the testimony of our own conscience. As long as we think of God as the God who is revealed in the dictates of conscience, we shall, I think, practically think of Him as a Person; and, on the other hand, to cease to think of God as a personal Being generally ends in thinking of Him as super-moral or (which is really at bottom

the same thing) as non-moral. We have every reason to think of moral distinctions as recognised by God, as part of His nature—as much reason as we have for supposing that for God as for man, two and two make four, and that the multiplication table is not a purely human affair. Individual persons may of course combine a speculative tendency towards more or less Pantheistic views of the universe with a full recognition of the authority of conscience, but it is not an accident that, whether we look to Oriental religions or to the history of Western philosophical thought, Pantheistic ways of thinking are generally found to end in the denial of any absolute distinction between right and wrong.

3. To believe that God is revealed in Christ is a great help to thinking of Him as a Person. I will not attempt to define exactly what we mean or what we ought to mean by speaking of the Divinity of Christ. I will only say that if we can see any meaning in the doctrine that God is revealed, not merely in some imperfect way by myriads of imperfect and partially conflicting consciences, but in some supreme manner by one conscience, that will partially, I think, make it natural to think of God as a Person, and help to secure the spiritual advantages of that conviction. The importance of believing in God at all arises from the help and strength which it gives in the struggle against evil within and evil without. It is easier to reverence and obey a conscience which comes to us as the revelation of a supreme mind, than a conscience which is recognized as a mere product of blind evolution, and it is easier so to think of conscience when we can discover manifested in an historical Person a mind which appeals to us as conscience at its highest. If we habitually think of God as being like Christ, and of Christ as being like God, we shall practically find it impossible not to think of Him as a person. A person cannot well be like any thing but a person.